KAPPAN

Riding the Pendulum Of Educational Change

Robert E. Slavin

Plus the Second
Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa
Teacher Poll

About That Teacher Poll

AS MOST readers know, Stanley Elam was *Kappan* editor from 1956 until his retirement in 1981. For most of those years, Phi Delta Kappa was dominated by male school administrators. During that period, Elam became known as an advocate for teachers, a leader in the collective bargaining movement, and a proponent of the constitutional change in the early Seventies that allowed chapters of Phi Delta Kappa to initiate women. Therefore, when Elam characterizes teachers as self-styled martyrs – as he does in his summary of the 1989 Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa poll of teachers' attitudes, which begins on page 785 of this issue – it gives me pause.

Of course, Elam is quick to add that teachers have many reasons to be dissatisfied. And he's absolutely right.

Just the other day, for example, I spoke to a kindergarten teacher whose district has decided (without her input or that of her colleagues) to test incoming kindergartners this spring for "readiness." The individually administered tests will take approximately 60 minutes each, and this teacher and her colleagues will be responsible for administering a goodly number of those tests – between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. on schooldays. The teacher with whom I spoke questions the value of the tests and the wisdom of the whole procedure, which makes the burden of this extra, unplanned work even harder for her to swallow. The outcome? A feeling of powerlessness. And her situation is not unusual.

The professional lives of most teachers are rigidly fixed. The central office tells them which textbooks to use. The curriculum is "teacher-proof." The tests (on which teacher accountability rests) are mandated by the district or by the state.

Teachers can't even take bathroom breaks, except at specified intervals. Their lunches are snatched on the fly, to free them for lunchroom supervision or for playground duties. Their workdays give them limited time for preparation – and virtually no time for reflection on what they've done well or on what needs improvement.

Effective teaching is no 40-hour-a-week enterprise. Good teachers are thinking constantly about their classrooms, their lesson plans, their instructional approaches. They take their students' learning and behavioral problems home at night – along with reams of papers to grade. They spend hundreds of dollars of their own money to provide classroom necessities that are not covered by tight school district budgets. They frequently deal with students who do not respect them and parents who do not support their efforts. Eventually, those who have other options begin to ask, "Why am I doing this?"

Betty Friedan noted in *The Feminine Mystique* that ours is a society that measures individual worth by the size of one's paycheck. In that regard, teachers rank lower than most other college graduates – and they feel undervalued.

In his summary of poll findings, however, Elam has put his finger on one part of the problem. Teaching is – in the public mind, at least – a part-time job. Until teachers are willing to put in as many total workdays – not total *hours* (which, I submit, many of them already do) – as other members of the U.S. work force, they'll get little sympathy from the public on the subject of salaries. Yet 63% of teachers oppose a longer school year, even though that would be a quick way to boost salaries.

I'd have welcomed the tradeoff. Ten years of mediocre pay – the final two, without a contract settlement – ultimately drove me from the classroom. Low salaries discourage and defeat many practicing educators; they also dissuade high-quality candidates from entering the profession.

Yet compromise requires give-and-take. Where teacher salaries are concerned, that's a reality that neither the public *nor* teachers can afford to ignore. – PBG

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Cover Illustration: Ned Shaw

THE SECOND GALLUP/ PHI DELTA KAPPA POLL OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By Stanley M. Elam

Illustration by Susanna Spann

THE PORTRAIT of a profession that emerges from the second Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa survey of the attitudes of U.S. teachers toward the public schools is not a pretty sight. Teachers tend to regard themselves as martyrs. Overwhelmingly, they believe that they are unappreciated and underrewarded, and they blame almost everyone but themselves for recognized school problems. (Parents and students are particularly targeted.) Teachers give themselves and their own schools rather good grades, but they grade their administrators and their own teacher training less favorably.

A two-thirds majority of teachers opposes the idea of merit pay; even the few who support it do so not because merit pay might improve student achievement, but because "good teachers would be rewarded." Yet the vast majority of laypersons (84%) likes the idea of merit pay for teachers. Clearly, there is a problem here.

An overwhelming 82% of teachers believe that they are underpaid, whereas only 37% of the general public believe that teachers are underpaid. Thus the problem is compounded.

Although many critics believe that the shorter school year in the U.S. accounts for much of the achievement deficit of American children compared with those of other industrialized nations, 63% of the teachers surveyed oppose an extended school year, regardless of salary considerations.

A majority of teachers would like to have the right to paddle misbehaving youngsters, despite outright bans on corporal punishment in many states and school districts.

And, more often than members of the general public, teachers say that they would not like to see their own sons and daughters take up teaching as a career.

Nowhere is the martyr syndrome among teachers more apparent than in the ratings they give to 12 different occupations on scales measuring their value to society and their prestige. Teachers see their own services as more valuable than those of all 11 other occupations that they rated, including medicine, the clergy, and the bench. At the same time, teachers place their prestige at the bottom of the totem pole, below even funeral directors, realtors, and advertising practitioners. The gap that teachers perceive between the value of their services and their prestige is three times as great as the similar gap for physicians, members of the clergy, and public school principals.

Teachers don't think that they have the authority they need. They are convinced that they do not have enough control over such vital aspects of instruction as setting discipline policies for their schools, establishing grading policies, and determining academic standards.

Predictably, teachers do not generally believe that, after five years of "school reform," public schools in their communities have improved. Thirty-six percent say that schools have improved, 38% think that they have remained about the same, and 25% think that they have gotten worse.

I do not contend that teachers feel put upon for no reason. They have many reasons to be dissatisfied. And the fact that so many of them are disgruntled is sufficient reason to reconsider some approaches to the improvement of U.S. public education that have become popular in recent years.

In the pages that follow, I present details of the findings of the new Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa survey that support these observations, along with answers to a number of questions that reveal teacher attitudes on other professional issues of the day. In most instances, it is possible to compare current attitudes with those of teachers who responded

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to the first Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa teacher survey, conducted in 1984.* In several cases, teachers' attitudes can also be compared with current attitudes of the general public.

I should point out that, because of the high turnover in America's public school teaching force, perhaps no more than half of the men and women teaching in the public schools today were teaching in 1984, when the first survey was made.** Thus we are comparing opinions of two quite different groups of teachers; nonetheless, the issues remain the same. Interestingly, significant shifts of opinion between teachers in 1984 and teachers today were relatively rare. Where they occurred, I have noted the fact.

Most Important Problems Facing Local Public Schools

As in 1984, the most frequently mentioned problem — named by 34% of all teachers in 1989 — is parents' lack of interest and support. The respondents articulated this problem in a variety of ways. Some said that they have "no backing from parents on discipline." Others charged that "parents don't help students realize the importance of preparing for the future." Some pointed to "parental apathy," while others said that "parents lack faith in the school system." Elementary teachers were somewhat more likely than secondary teachers (39% to 25%) to mention lack of parental interest and support.

Lack of proper financial support was the second most frequently mentioned problem, both in 1984 and in 1989. Many teachers recognize how closely the lack of financial support is related to other school problems. As one put it, "We don't have enough money, which is why we have few first-rate teachers, which is why we have poor parental support and student respect, which is why we don't have enough money. It's a vicious circle."

In the last three Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa polls of the public's attitudes toward the public schools, drug abuse has replaced poor discipline as the most frequently cited problem. Since 1984 there has also been an increase in the frequency with which teachers mention this problem. But it is not one of the first problems that teachers think to mention. In fact, it was mentioned first by only 15 elementary teachers and 14 secondary teachers out of 830 respondents: 472 (57.2%) identified as elementary teachers, 270 (32.7%) identified as secondary teachers, and 35 (4.2%) identified as both. (Forty-eight respondents classified themselves as "other," and five didn't complete this item.)

*See Alec Gallup, "The Gallup Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan*, October 1984, pp. 97-107; and idem, "The Gallup Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, Part 2," *Phi Delta Kappan*, January 1985, pp. 323-30.

**According to the Research Division of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the median length of service for U.S. teachers is now about eight years. Forty percent of beginning teachers drop out within five years, the AFT says.

The question:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?

Listed in Rank Order of Mention By All Teachers In 1984	All Teachers 1984 %	All Teachers 1989** %	Elementary Teachers 1984 %	Elementary Teachers 1989 %	High School Teachers 1984 %	High School Teachers 1989 %	U.S. Public 1988** %
Parents' lack of interest/support	31	34(1)	35	39	26	25	7(6)
Lack of proper financial support	21	27(2)	20	28	21	25	12(3)
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	20	26(3)	17	21	23	35	5(9T)
Lack of discipline	19	25(4T)	20	29	18	22	19(2)
Problems with administration	10	7(9T)	8	10	12	7	1(18T)
Poor curriculum/ poor standards	7	6(13)	7	7	7	6	11(4T)
Use of drugs	5	13(7)	3	10	6	19	32(1)
Low teacher salaries	5	7(9T)	5	8	5	5	4(12T)
Difficulty getting good teachers	4	2(21T)	3	3	4	1	11(4T)
Large schools/ overcrowding	4	7(9T)	5	8	2	3	6(7T)
Teachers' lack of interest	4	3(18T)	5	3	4	3	3(14T)
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	4	7(9T)	4	8	4	5	2(16T)
One-parent households	4	8(8)	4	9	4	7	*(24T)
Lack of public support	3	14(6)	3	12	4	15	*(24T)
Communication problems	3	3(18T)	4	3	3	4	1(18T)
Government interference/regulation	3	5(14)	2	6	4	4	*(24T)
Integration/busing	2	*(27)	2	*	2	*	4(12T)
Lack of proper facilities	2	4(15T)	2	4	3	5	1(18T)
School board policies/politics	2	2(21T)	2	2	2	2	1(18T)
Parental involvement with school activities	2	3(18T)	3	3	2	2	1(18T)
Mismanagement of funds/programs	2	2(21T)	3	1	2	4	1(18T)
Moral standards	2	4(15T)	2	4	2	7	6(7T)
Drinking/alcoholism	2	2(21T)	2	2	3	7	5(9T)
Lack of needed teachers	2	2(21T)	2	2	1	2	2(16T)
Crime/vandalism	1	1(26)	*	1	2	1	3(14T)
Miscellaneous/other	NA†	25(4T)	NA†	27	NA†	27	5(9T)
No answer	NA†	4(15T)	NA†	4	NA†	4	NA†

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

*Less than one-half of 1%.

**The rank of each response for the 1988 public survey and for the 1989 teacher survey appears in parentheses. T means that a response tied for a given rank.

†Data not available.

The Discipline Problem

Four questions in the current poll examined teachers' views on student discipline, which in all but one survey until 1986 was most often mentioned by the general public as a serious problem for the public schools. The table below shows that only about half of all teacher respondents view discipline as either a very serious or a fairly serious problem.

Illustrations by Susanna Spann

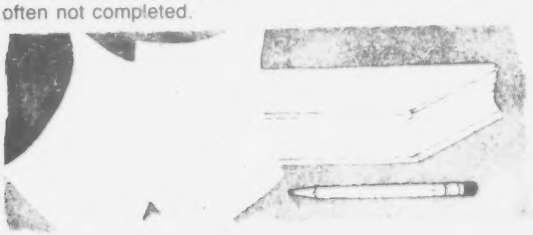
The first question:

How serious a problem would you say discipline is in the public schools in your community — very serious, fairly serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %
Very serious	16	11	17	11	15	11	34
Fairly serious	33	39	29	39	36	38	34
Not too serious	35	42	38	43	32	41	22
Not at all serious	14	8	12	6	17	9	4
No opinion	2	*	4	*	*	1	6

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Respondents were asked to estimate the frequency of 18 different kinds of student disciplinary or behavior problems that are commonly reported. Here again, teacher perceptions in both the 1984 and 1989 polls differ markedly from those of the general public, as expressed in the 1984 public poll. In the following table, note the disparities in almost every category; the public appears to exaggerate the student disciplinary problem, if teacher perceptions are correct. One notable exception: teachers are much more aware than the public that schoolwork and homework are often not completed.



The second question:

About how often do each of the problems listed occur at the school in which you teach?

	Most of the Time/Fairly Often						
	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984* %
School work and homework assignments not completed	76	79	73	76	80	85	64
Behavior that disrupts class	47	57	48	60	47	50	60
Truancy/being absent from school	47	45	29	32	62	67	53
Talking back to, disobeying teachers	43	45	42	45	43	44	56
Cheating on tests	40	45	29	33	51	64	46
Sloppy or inappropriate dress	37	45	33	43	41	49	47
Skipping classes	35	29	16	18	57	59	56
Stealing money or personal property belonging to other students, teachers, or staff	32	32	25	26	39	40	38

	Most of the Time/Fairly Often						
	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984* %
Vandalizing of school property	29	25	22	20	35	34	39
Theft of school property	23	15	18	13	29	19	34
Use of drugs at school	17	14	6	5	29	30	53
Selling drugs at school	13	14	4	1	24	32	47
Drinking alcoholic beverages at school	10	6	2	1	17	14	35
Carrying of knives, firearms, or other weapons at school	8	4	5	3	10	8	29
Sexual activity at school	8	6	3	1	12	13	24
Racial fights between whites, blacks, Hispanics or other minorities	4	6	3	5	5	9	22
Taking money or property by force, using weapons or threats	2	2	2	2	2	2	18
Physical attacks on teachers or staff	1	2	1	2	1	2	15

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

*The question was phrased, "As I read off the following problems by letter, would you please tell me how often you think each problem occurs in the public schools in this community — just your impression?"

By a margin of 56% to 38%, teachers approve of spanking and other forms of physical punishment as a last resort. This margin is somewhat greater than that found for the U.S. public in 1988 (50% for, 45% against). It would be instructive to know just when teachers would resort to corporal punishment to modify behavior — but, as is often the case in polls of this kind, the follow-up question was not asked.

The third question:

Spanking and similar forms of physical punishment are permitted in the lower grades of some schools for children who do not respond to other forms of discipline. Do you approve of this practice?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %	U.S. Public (1988) %
Approve	56	56	55	50
Disapprove	38	39	37	45
Don't know	6	5	8	5

Because the drug problem has been so prominent in the minds of respondents to the last three Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa polls of public attitudes toward the public schools, teachers were asked for their opinion on this issue.

The fourth question:

How serious a problem would you say drug abuse is among students in the public schools of your community?

	All Teachers %	Elementary Teachers %	High School Teachers %
Very serious	9	8	11
Fairly serious	48	48	51
Not too serious	34	34	35
Not at all serious	7	7	3
Don't know	2	2	1

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)

Grading the Public Schools

As in 1984, teachers in the current survey give the public schools in their own communities high marks. Using the traditional academic grading system, two-thirds of America's teachers (66%) give their schools grades of A or B; only 4% give a D, and less than 1% give an F. They give the schools in which they teach somewhat higher grades tnan other schools in the community. Although these grades contrast with those given by the general public in 1988 (when 40% gave the schools a grade of A or B), they are no higher than the grades the typical layperson gives the school that his or her oldest child attends.

The question:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL? How about the public school in which you teach?

	Teacher Ratings				U.S. Public Ratings	
	Local Schools		Your Own School		Local Schools	School Own Child Attends
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1988 %	1988 %
A + B	64	66	72	75	40	70
A	12	11	21	22	9	22
B	52	55	51	53	31	48
C	27	29	20	21	34	22
D	4	4	4	3	10	3
FAIL	1	*	2	1	4	2
Don't know	4	1	2	1	12	3

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.

Five Other Ratings

U.S. teachers are even more positive about the performance of teachers than they are about the performance of the schools, with 83% awarding teachers grades of A or B in the current poll. This highly favorable rating does not carry over to the performance of administrators and school boards. However, 57% of teachers give the training they received in college a grade of A or B. The lowest grades of all go to parents for the way they bring up their children.

The question:

What grade would you give the teachers in the local public schools? The administrators in the local public schools? [The local school board?] The parents of students in the local public schools for bringing up their children? The teacher training you received in college?

	Teachers		Administrators		School Board	Parents		College Training Received	
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984** %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %
A + B	78	83	44	49	29	21	22	49	57
A	18	20	10	9	4	2	2	14	17
B	60	63	34	40	25	19	20	35	40
C	17	15	34	36	36	45	49	33	32
D	2	1	15	11	19	24	22	10	7
FAIL	*	*	5	3	13	7	6	5	3
Don't know	3	1	2	1	3	3	2	2	1

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.
**Not asked in 1989.

Teachers and Teaching

A number of questions in the 1989 survey asked teachers how they feel about their profession, including such controversial topics as merit pay, why teachers leave the profession, and who should control various aspects of the educational process.

Attracting and Retaining Good Teachers

In 1984 more than one-third (37%) of U.S. teachers reported that their schools were having difficulty in getting good teachers for their schools, and about one-half (48%) said that their schools were having difficulty in keeping good teachers. Figures for 1989 tell a different story. Apparently, teachers today believe that the shortage of good teachers has been considerably relieved.

The first question:

Does the school in which you teach have difficulty in getting good teachers?

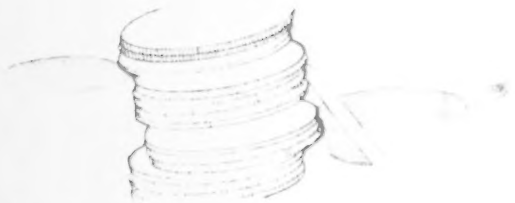
	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers	
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %
Yes	37	19	31	16	45	25
No	57	75	65	79	48	69
No opinion	6	5	4	5	7	6

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)

The second question:

Does the school in which you teach have difficulty in keeping good teachers?

	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers	
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %
Yes	48	32	43	25	55	40
No	47	66	52	73	39	57
No opinion	5	2	5	2	6	3



Salary Levels

Reflecting a real though small increase in the average salaries of teachers since the current reform movement began in the early Eighties, the respondents to the current poll show somewhat *less dissatisfaction* with their salaries than did 1984 respondents. In that year, nine out of 10 teachers said that their salaries were too low; today, about eight out of 10 say so.

Still, every segment of the 1989 sample registered strong dissatisfaction. Of those whose annual teaching incomes are below $25,000, 85% said that salaries are too low; the comparable figure for teachers with incomes above $25,000 is 78%. Eighty-four percent of male respondents (who made up 35% of the sample) said that salaries are too low; the comparable figure for females is 80%. Of those under age 30, 71% said that salaries are too low; of those over age 30, 80% said so. By region, 72% of respondents in the Northeast said that salaries are too low; 78% of respondents in the Midwest, 91% of respondents in the South, and 77% of respondents in the West agreed.

Asked to report their annual income from teaching, 80% of teachers in the current survey said that their income falls in the $20,000 to $40,000 range, with a median of about $30,000. Interestingly, 4% reported salaries of $45,000 or more, suggesting that the financial opportunities for teachers are better than many people realize.

The question:

Do you think salaries for teachers in this community are too high, too low, or just about right?

	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %
Too low	90	82	89	80	90	84	37
Too high	*	*	*	*	*	*	7
Just about right	9	18	10	19	9	16	41
No opinion	1	*	1	*	1	*	15

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.

Why Teachers Leave the Profession

To identify reasons why teachers think that their colleagues are leaving the profession and, implicitly, why it is difficult to attract good people to the profession, respondents were given a list of frequently mentioned reasons and asked to select three that they consider the main reasons for teachers' leaving the field.

Predictably, by far the most frequently mentioned reason was low salaries, chosen by 77% of respondents in 1989 (and by 87% of respondents in 1984). Significantly, "lack of public financial support for education" was chosen much more frequently in 1989 than in 1984: 69% versus 26%. Other figures for the two polls show changes in teachers' opinions over time, but none are as large as this one.

In 1982 the public poll asked the same question. The public attached far less importance than teachers do to salaries and far more importance to discipline problems as reasons why teachers leave teaching.

The question:

Many public school teachers are leaving the classroom. Here are some reasons that are sometimes given. Which three of these do you think are the main reasons why teachers are leaving their jobs?

	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1982 %
Low teacher salaries	87	77	85	76	89	79	52
Discipline problems in schools	46	43	49	45	41	38	63
Low standing of teaching as a profession	38	45	37	46	38	42	15
Students are unmotivated, uninterested in school	37	36	31	30	41	45	37
Lack of public financial support for education	26	69	24	69	28	68	24
Parents don't support the teachers	21	32	25	35	16	27	37
Outstanding teacher performance goes unrewarded	20	29	16	29	25	30	13
Difficulty of advancement	19	NA*	19	NA*	19	NA*	14
Parents are not interested in children's progress	11	11	11	10	11	13	25

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Data not available because this reason was not included in the 1989 list.

Higher Salaries in Certain Subject Areas

Shortages of qualified teachers in science, in mathematics, and in vocational and technical subjects continue to be a problem because opportunities for people with skills in these areas command better salaries in business and industry. However, in 1989 as in 1984, teachers oppose paying higher salaries to those who teach in these areas. The public was about evenly divided on the issue in 1984.

The question:

Today there is a shortage of teachers in science, math, technical subjects, and vocational subjects. If your local schools needed teachers in these subjects, would you favor or oppose paying them higher wages than teachers of other subjects?

	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %
Favor	21	21	18	18	25	29	48
Oppose	75	75	80	77	70	67	43
No opinion	4	4	2	5	5	4	9

Merit Pay

In 1989 U.S. teachers oppose the idea of merit pay for their services by the same 2-1 margin as teachers did in the 1984 survey. This ratio holds for every important segment of the teacher population. It is, of course, in direct opposition to public sentiment as expressed in several public polls, including the 1988 Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools.

The question:

How do you, yourself, feel about the idea of merit pay for teachers? In general, do you favor or oppose it?

	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1988* %
Favor	32	31	29	29	35	34	84
Oppose	64	61	67	64	62	56	11
No opinion	4	8	4	7	3	9	5

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)

*The question was phrased, "Do you favor or oppose an increased pay scale for those teachers who have proved themselves particularly capable?"

Reasons for Favoring/Opposing Merit Pay

Teachers oppose merit pay for two basic reasons: 1) the difficulty of obtaining fair evaluations of merit and 2) the morale problems that different pay for the same job might cause. Among the one-third of teachers who favor merit pay, the main reason given was that good teachers would be rewarded for their greater effectiveness.

The question:

Why do you favor/oppose merit pay for teachers?

	All Teachers	
	1984 %	1989 %
Oppose	64	61
Difficult to give a fair evaluation	23	47
Would create problems/morale problems	12	26
Administrators can't evaluate fairly	12	16
Political problems	8	20
Can't be objectively measured	12	22
Other	5	19
Favor	32	31
Good teachers would be rewarded	25	26
Children would benefit	1	3
Other	7	5
No opinion	4	8

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Who Should Determine Which Teachers Receive Merit Pay?

Not surprisingly, teachers tend to think that a committee of teachers should determine who receives merit pay, if the idea should be adopted over their opposition. But in both the 1984 and 1989 surveys, a sizable number said that the principal should make these decisions.

The question:

Suppose that your own school were to adopt the merit pay plan. Who, in your opinion, should determine which teachers should be given merit increases?

	All Teachers*	
	1984 %	1989 %
Committee of teachers	63	50
School principal	57	43
Committee of outside educators	42	35
Students	22	15
Parents	19	13
Other	11	10
No one qualified	2	16
Don't know	3	8

(Figures do not add to 100% because of multiple answers.)

*The percentages for 1989 shown above were determined by dividing the number of times a choice was made by the total number of survey respondents. The 1984 percentages were determined by dividing the number of choices by the total number of individuals responding to this item.

Illustrations by Susanna Spann

What Percentage of Teachers Deserve Merit Pay?

In the 1989 survey, 34% of the respondents who favor merit pay said that half or more of all teachers in the public schools deserve merit pay. Another 39% said that between 20% and 50% of all teachers deserve merit pay.

The question:

What percentage of teachers in the public schools deserve merit pay? (Asked of those who favor the idea.)

	All Teachers	
	1984 %	1989 %
Under 10%	13	9
10% to 19%	23	18
20% to 29%	17	25
30% to 39%	**	10
40% to 49%	**	4
50% to 59%	**	12
60% to 99%	17	22
No answer	7	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

**In the 1984 report, responses between 30% and 59% were aggregated; 23% of the total responses fell within this range.

A State Board Examination for Teachers

State board examinations for teachers are among the current reforms that have been well-received in state legislatures. And a majority of U.S. teachers accepts this form of accountability. About the same percentage of teachers who approved the idea in 1984 did so in the 1989 survey. The proposal seems to be slightly more attractive to secondary teachers than to elementary teachers. The general public was highly favorable to such examinations in 1984.

The question:

In addition to meeting college requirements for a teacher's certificate, should those who want to become teachers also be required to pass a state board examination to prove their knowledge in the subjects they will teach, before they are hired?

	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %
Yes	63	60	60	59	67	64	89
No	30	33	34	33	25	27	7
No opinion	7	8	6	8	8	9	4

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)

Desirability of Teaching as a Profession

In the Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa public polls, respondents have often been asked whether they would like to see a son or daughter of theirs become a public school teacher. Their answers have proved to be a sensitive barometer of changing attitudes toward the desirability of teaching as a profession. Significantly, in both the 1984 and 1989 surveys, teachers were *less enthusiastic* about the desirability of a teaching career for their offspring than were laypersons.

The questions:

Would you like to have a *daughter* of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?
Would you like to have a *son* of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

	Daughter		Son		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1988* %
Yes	43	48	31	38	58
No	46	40	59	50	31
No opinion	11	11	10	11	11

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)

*The 1988 poll of the public did not distinguish between sons and daughters entering the profession. Earlier polls, however, have shown the public to be more reluctant to have sons become teachers.

Value and Status of Different Occupations

Two questions framed to examine teachers' perceptions of the value to society and of the status of different occupations reveal a deep sense of outrage among teachers. Teachers believe that their standing in society falls far short of the value of their contributions to it. Ironically, their assessment of their own status does not match the public's assessment, as shown in the 1984 Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa poll of the public. In both 1984 and 1989 teachers ranked themselves *first* in value and *last* in status; in 1984 the public ranked them *third* in value and *eighth* in status among the 12 occupations listed.

It is worthy of note that in only four instances do teachers, on the average, believe that an occupation's worth is greater than its prestige. These occupations are teaching, where the discrepancy is a startling 4.1 places on the 10-point scale used, the school principalship, where the discrepancy is 1.2 places; the clergy, where it is one place; and funeral direction, where it is .4 of a place.

The question:

Now we would like your impressions about different professions and occupations — based on your personal experience or on what you've heard or read. To indicate your impression, please use a scale that goes from the lowest rating of zero to the highest rating of 10.

First, rate the professions listed for the amount each contributes to the general good of society. The more you feel it contributes to the good of society, the higher the number you should circle; the less you feel it contributes, the lower the number you should circle.

Then rate these professions for the amount of prestige or status you feel people in each profession have in your community.

	Contribution to General Good of Society						Prestige or Status					
	All Teachers				U.S. Public		All Teachers				U.S. Public	
	1984 % at "10" Level*	Rank	1989 Average Rating*	Rank	1984 % at "10" Level*	Rank	1984 % at "10" Level*	Rank	1989 Average Rating*	Rank	1984 % at "10" Level*	Rank
Public school teachers	59	1	8.8	1	29	3	1	12	4.7	12	19	7
Physicians	46	2	8.7	2	41	2	68	1	9.2	1	59	1
Clergy	43	3	8.4	3	46	1	20	6	7.4	6	42	2
Public school principals	19	4	7.4	5	28	4	3	10(T)**	6.2	8	25	6
Judges	13	5	7.5	4	12	7(T)**	45	2	8.5	2	31	4(T)**
Lawyers	6	6	5.8	9	12	7(T)**	32	3	8.3	3	31	4(T)**
Funeral directors	5	7	5.6	10	20	5	4	8(T)**	5.2	11	17	8
Business executives	4	8	6.1	6	NA†	NA†	26	4	8.0	4	NA†	NA†
Local political officeholders	4	9	5.8	8	8	9	15	7	6.9	7	16	9
Bankers	3	10	5.9	7	14	6	22	5	7.7	5	35	3
Realtors	2	11	5.3	11	7	10	3	10(T)**	5.4	10	6	11
Advertising practitioners	2	12	4.2	12	4	11	4	8(T)**	5.4	9	8	10

*In tabulating 1984 responses, the Gallup Organization considered only ratings of 10 given each occupation, having learned that it is possible to rank almost as accurately on this basis as it is by finding, in a more tedious process, an average of all ratings. In tabulating the 1989 survey, however, we have used the latter procedure.

**T means that a response tied for a given rank.

†Data not available.

Unions, Strikes, and Arbitration

In 1989 teachers are even more firmly convinced than they were in 1984 that unionization and bargaining over salaries, working conditions, and the like have improved the quality of public education in the U.S. The most recent Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa poll of the public on this question was conducted in 1981. At that time the public believed, by a 2-1 margin, that unionization had hurt public education.

The first question:

Most teachers in the nation now belong to unions or associations that bargain over salaries, working conditions, and the like. Has unionization, in your opinion, helped, hurt, or made no difference in the quality of public education in the U.S.?

	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1981 %
Helped	49	64	48	66	50	63	18
Hurt	18	10	20	9	15	11	37
No difference	26	20	25	19	28	22	33
No opinion	7	6	7	6	7	5	12

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)

The next question dealt with teacher strikes. Teacher opinion on whether strikes should be permitted has changed little since 1984.

The second question:

Should public school teachers be permitted to strike or not?

	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1999 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1981 %
Yes	63	63	58	61	70	68	37
No	26	29	30	30	20	25	56
No opinion	11	8	12	10	10	7	7

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)

Teachers and the general public are almost equally in favor of compulsory arbitration of disputes between teacher unions and school boards. Teacher opinion on this issue hasn't changed over the past five years.

The third question:

In case an agreement cannot be reached between a teacher union and the school board, would you favor or oppose a plan that would require the dispute to be settled by the decision of an arbitrator or panel acceptable to both the union and the school board?

	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1982 %
Favor	90	92	88	91	92	93	79
Oppose	3	3	4	4	2	3	7
No opinion	7	5	8	5	6	3	14

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)

Illustrations by Suzanne Spann

Teacher Control of the Educational Process

Teachers appear to be dissatisfied with the amount of control they have over 10 vital aspects of the educational process. Asked to rate these aspects on a Likert scale, first as to the amount of control they think they should have and then as to the amount they actually have, teachers perceived themselves as lacking actual authority in nine out of 10 cases. The single exception (determining what to teach in class) was a virtual standoff.*

The two areas in which teachers feel most seriously deprived of authority, according to the 1989 survey (the question was not asked in 1984), were 1) determining academic standards for their schools and 2) establishing the school schedule. Not far behind were: setting grading policies; determining which students are placed in which classes; setting discipline policy for the school; and determining how school funds are spent on instructional materials.

The questions:

In your opinion, how much control *should* public school teachers have over the aspects of the educational process listed below? Use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents something you think teachers should have no control over and 5 represents something you think teachers should have complete control over.

Now, please indicate how much control teachers in your school *actually have* over these same aspects of the educational process. Use the same scale, where 1 represents something you think teachers in your school *have no control over* and 5 represents something you think teachers *have complete control over*.

	Average Ratings		
	Should Have Control	Actually Have Control	Difference
Determining which students are placed in which classes	3.5	2.3	−1.2
Selecting textbooks to be used in class	4.2	3.1	−1.1
Setting disciplinary policies for the school	3.7	2.5	−1.2
Deciding how to teach a given class	4.6	4.2	− .4
Setting grading policies	4.2	3.0	−1.2
Determining the amount of homework given to students	4.4	4.1	− .3
Determining academic standards for the school, such as required courses	3.5	2.0	−1.5
Deciding what to teach in class	4.1	4.2	+ .1
Determining how school funds are spent on instructional materials for the school	3.6	2.4	−1.2
Determining the school schedule, such as how many classes there should be per day	3.3	1.7	−1.6

Control of the Curriculum

As one would expect, given their answers to the preceding question, teachers believe that they should have the greatest influence in deciding what is taught in the public schools of their communities. But they are willing to share control. Opinions on this question haven't changed much since 1984.

The question:

In your opinion, who should have the greatest influence in deciding what is taught in the public schools of your community?

	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers	
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %
Teachers	33	36	31	36	35	36
Local school board	19	15	17	15	20	15
State government	17	18	19	18	16	17
Federal government	3	4	2	4	3	4
Parents	2	11	2	9	2	15
Principals and other administrators	*	9	*	11	*	7
No opinion	26	7	29	7	24	7

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)
*Not included in the 1984 list.

Current and Perennial Issues

The 1989 survey asked teachers how they feel about such perennial issues as the goals of education and the subjects that should be required in high school. Teachers were also asked their opinions of more current topics, including extending the school day or year and censoring student publications.

The Goals of Education

There is reassuring agreement between public school teachers and the general public on the importance of most of the commonly expressed goals of education. However, the public has a disconcerting tendency to rank a great many of the goals very high — a tendency that teachers would regard as unrealistic because of the schools' limited time and resources.

There is also considerable stability over the five years separating the two surveys in teacher perceptions of the importance of each of these goals. However, there are several exceptions, including the following:

- The ability to think — creatively, objectively, and analytically — was much more highly prized by the 1989 sample of teachers, as was the need to encourage a desire for lifelong learning.
- Teachers in 1989 seemed more certain of the importance of developing the ability to get along with different kinds of people and of developing respect for and understanding of other races, religions, nations, and cultures.

*Questions very similar to these were asked in 1988 by the Research Division of the National Education Association. The results were similar.

• Teachers in 1989 gave a higher rating to developing the ability to deal with adult responsibilities and problems — e.g., sex, marriage, parenting, personal finances, alcohol and drug abuse.

One unanticipated finding was that teachers do not attach as much importance to "gaining knowledge and understanding of science and scientific facts" as does the general public. The same is true of the need "to gain knowledge of the important facts of history, geography, etc."

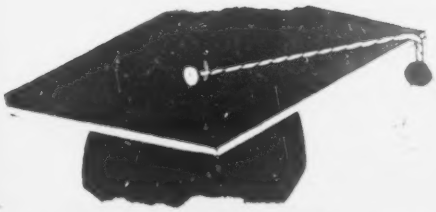
Another interesting difference, in view of the attention given to the importance of computers in today's technological society, is the fact that few teachers gave a "10" rating to the goal of "developing the ability to understand and use computers," although 43% of public respondents did so.

Finally, there is the not unexpected difference between teachers and the public on the importance of "helping students get good/high-paying jobs." In this and other polls, the general public has always strongly endorsed this pragmatic goal.

The question:

Please rate the importance of each of the following possible goals of education on a scale of zero to 10. A zero means a goal is not at all important and should not be part of the public school program. A 10 means a goal is the most important goal — before all others. A rating between zero and 10 means you consider the goal to be somewhere in between in importance.

	Percentage Giving Highest ("10") Rating						
	All Teachers		Elementary Teachers		High School Teachers		U.S. Public
	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %
To help develop good work habits, the ability to organize one's thoughts, the ability to concentrate	56	63	58	64	54	62	48
To develop the ability to think — creatively, objectively, analytically	56	80	54	83	58	77	51
To develop the ability to speak and write correctly	55	62	54	65	57	60	68
To develop the ability to use mathematics for everyday problems	53	55	55	59	52	37	54
To encourage the desire to continue learning throughout one's life	51	73	53	78	48	68	41
To encourage respect for law and order, for obeying the rules of society	46	55	48	57	42	51	52
To develop the ability to live in a complex and changing world	41	49	41	52	42	48	51
To prepare those who plan to attend college for college	36	46	37	49	36	43	46
To develop skills needed to get jobs for those not planning to attend college	34	50	37	52	31	48	54
To develop standards of what is "right and wrong"	33	48	36	51	30	43	64
To develop the desire to excel	32	31	31	31	32	31	51
To develop an understanding of democracy and to promote participation in the political process	31	49	31	50	31	49	33
To develop the ability to get along with different kinds of people	31	45	35	46	26	45	42
To develop respect for and understanding of other races, religions, nations, and cultures	30	51	31	54	27	47	39
To develop the ability to deal with adult responsibilities and problems, e.g., sex, marriage, parenting, personal finances, alcohol and drug abuse	28	43	28	45	28	41	46
To help students make realistic plans for what they will do after high school graduation	27	37	30	39	24	36	52
To develop an understanding about different kinds of jobs and careers, including their requirements and rewards	20	21	22	22	17	18	56
To gain knowledge and understanding of science and scientific facts	17	25	16	26	18	25	45
To gain knowledge of the important facts of history, geography, etc.	15	24	14	25	16	25	42
To develop an appreciation for and participation in the arts, music, literature, theater, etc.	14	19	14	20	13	18	35
To help students overcome personal problems	13	17	16	20	11	13	45
To develop the ability to understand and use computers	12	14	12	16	12	12	43
To promote physical development through sports programs	8	12	9	13	7	12	20
To help students get good/high-paying jobs	6	13	7	12	6	14	46
To develop an appreciation of the "good" things in life	6	6	7	6	5	7	32



High School Subject Requirements

One of the major recommendations of the National Commission on Excellence in Education in its 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, was that significantly more time be devoted in high school to the traditional basics, English and mathematics, as well as to certain "new" basics, including science, computer science, foreign languages for the college-bound, and vocational training.

Judging by their responses to this question in 1984 and in 1989, teachers wholeheartedly approve of these recommendations. Over the past five years, teachers have come to endorse these subjects still more strongly, even for those students not planning to attend college. Virtually all teachers feel that English, mathematics, and science should be required for all students.

It is interesting to note, however, that whereas nearly all teachers think that these subjects should be required, differences emerge in response to a follow-up question concerning the number of years that each should be required.

The question:

If you were the one to decide, which of the following subjects would you require every public high school student who *plans to go on to college* to take? Please circle the number of years you would require for each subject you choose. What about those public high school students *who do not plan to go on to college* when they graduate? Which courses would you require them to take? Please circle the number of years you would require for each subject you choose.

Should Be Required For Those Planning to Go to College

	U.S. Public	All Teachers		Number of Years**							
				1		2		3		4	
	1987 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %
Mathematics	94	96	99	*	1	11	5	31	32	57	63
English	91	95	100	*	*	2	1	6	7	90	92
Science	83	95	100	1	*	25	16	35	38	37	46
History/U.S. government	84	95	99	6	*	36	27	29	33	27	38
Foreign language	56	77	88	17	12	60	59	12	16	10	13
Physical education	45	74	87	21	16	30	32	8	11	39	41
Health education	54	73	91	60	49	29	33	4	7	6	12
Business	59	63	79	53	47	37	37	5	12	3	5
Art	23	54	74	73	64	22	28	2	4	1	4
Music	23	49	73	76	62	19	29	1	5	2	4
Industrial arts/homemaking	31	46	68	62	64	29	27	4	5	3	5

(Not all figures for each subject add to 100% because of rounding.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.
**"No opinion" percentages were mostly 1% or 2%, so totals are sometimes less than 100%.
†No data available.

Should Be Required For Those Not Planning to Go to College

	U.S. Public	All Teachers		Number of Years**							
				1		2		3		4	
	1987 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %	1984 %	1989 %
Mathematics	88	94	96	4	3	41	40	27	30	27	28
English	85	93	96	*	*	8	9	19	22	72	69
Science	57	90	95	13	11	60	55	17	22	9	12
History/U.S. government	69	91	96	12	9	47	41	21	29	18	22
Foreign language	20	28	38	58	55	34	38	1	4	4	2
Physical education	41	73	86	20	15	31	33	8	12	39	40
Health education	49	75	92	57	47	29	34	6	8	7	2
Business	65	80	85	30	29	38	41	15	17	15	13
Art	†	45	67	74	69	21	23	2	3	2	4
Music	†	42	65	77	69	16	24	2	4	3	3
Industrial arts/homemaking	78	78	88	24	27	31	31	18	19	25	23

(Not all figures for each subject add to 100% because of rounding.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.
**"No opinion" percentages were mostly 1% or 2%, so totals are sometimes less than 100%.
†No data available.

Illustration by Susanna Spann

Sex Education

American teachers strongly support sex education in both the public high schools and the public elementary schools. Oddly enough, there has been a statistically significant decline in the approval rate between 1984 and 1989, particularly for sex education at the elementary level. As a result, public opinion and teacher opinion on sex education have converged in recent years. In 1987 public approval of sex education in the high school had reached the same level (76%) as is now found in the 1989 teacher survey. For elementary schools, the public approval rating reached 55% in 1987, matching the current teacher approval rating.

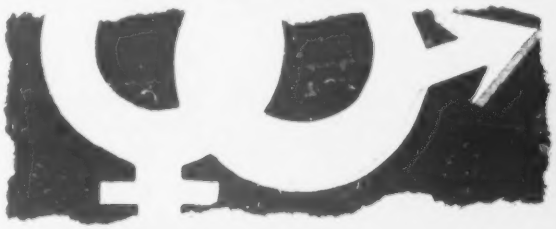
The questions:

Do you feel the public high schools should or should not include sex education in their instructional programs?

Do you feel the public *elementary* schools should or should not include sex education in grades 4 through 8?

	In High School						In Elementary School					
	Should		Should Not		No Opinion		Should		Should Not		No Opinion	
	'84 %	'89 %	'84 %	'89 %	'84 %	'89 %	'84 %	'89 %	'84 %	'89 %	'84 %	'89 %
Include sex education	86	76	8	16	6	8	75	55	18	37	7	8

With regard to specific topics that should be included in sex education, however, the public is still substantially more conservative than teachers. Although teachers were not asked in either survey whether they favor teaching about AIDS, it seems likely that they would strongly approve of doing so. In 1987 the public put AIDS instruction at the top of the list of approved topics, with 84% approving it for high school and 58% for elementary school. (The following questions were asked only of those who approved of sex education at the specified school level.)



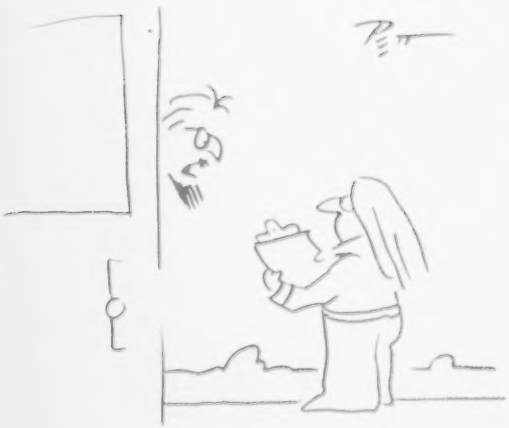
The questions:

Which of the following topics, if any, should be included in sex education for high school students?

Which of the following topics, if any, should be included in sex education for elementary students?

	In High School						In Elementary School					
	Should		Should Not		No Opinion		Should		Should Not		No Opinion	
	'84 %	'89 %	'84 %	'89 %	'84 %	'89 %	'84 %	'89 %	'84 %	'89 %	'84 %	'89 %
The biology of reproduction	83	99	15	1	2	*	70	88	28	12	2	*
Venereal disease (other than AIDS)	83	99	15	1	2	*	40	65	50	35	10	*
Birth control	80	96	18	4	2	*	29	44	58	56	13	*
Premarital sex	68	91	24	9	8	*	21	38	65	61	14	1
The nature of sexual intercourse	62	84	28	16	10	*	24	38	63	62	13	*
Abortion	64	88	27	12	9	*	18	27	65	73	17	*
Homosexuality	55	85	31	15	14	*	15	34	68	66	17	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.



"I don't know ... what do you think?"

Higher Standards

Three questions that deal with the "tougher standards" called for by the education reform movement were asked in both the 1984 and the 1989 teacher surveys. Although the general public has typically supported the notion of tougher standards for promotion from grade to grade and for high school graduation, the teaching profession — perhaps more aware of the tradeoffs involved — remains ambivalent.

When the question is tougher standards for admission to college, the public reverses itself, and a majority of teachers surveyed in 1989 agrees with the public that colleges should not raise admissions standards.

The first question:

In your opinion, should children be promoted from grade to grade only if they can pass examinations?

Illustrations by Susanna Spann

	All Teachers 1984 %	All Teachers 1989 %	U.S. Public 1984 %
Yes	43	35	71
No	52	59	25
No opinion	5	6	4

The second question:

Should all high school students in the United States be required to pass a standard nationwide examination in order to get a high school diploma?

	All Teachers 1984 %	All Teachers 1989 %	U.S. Public 1984 %
Yes	48	54	65
No	45	40	29
No opinion	7	6	6

The third question:

Do you feel that four-year colleges and universities should raise their entrance requirements or not?

	All Teachers 1984 %	All Teachers 1989 %	U.S. Public 1984 %
Yes	47	37	27
No	39	50	59
No opinion	14	13	14

Extending the School Day or Year

One of the major recommendations of *A Nation at Risk* was that either the school year or the school day (or both) be lengthened to provide more time for instruction. A majority of teachers oppose these ideas, and the opposition is no weaker today than it was in 1984.

The first question:

In some nations students attend school as many as 240 days a year, as compared to about 180 days in the U.S. Aside from the question of teacher/staff compensation, how do you feel about extending the public school year in this community by 30 days, making the school year about 210 days or 10 months long? Do you favor or oppose this idea?

	All Teachers 1984 %	All Teachers 1989 %	U.S. Public 1984* %	Elementary Teachers 1984 %	Elementary Teachers 1989 %	High School Teachers 1984 %	High School Teachers 1989 %
Favor	28	30	44	27	29	29	31
Oppose	66	63	50	67	64	66	61
No opinion	6	7	6	6	7	5	8

*In the poll of the public, the question was phrased, "In some nations students attend school as many as 240 days a year, as compared to 180 days in the U.S. How do you feel about extending the public school year in this community by 30 days, making the school year about 210 days or 10 months long? Do you favor or oppose this idea?"

The second question:

How do you feel about extending the school day by one hour in the school in which you teach? Aside from the question of teacher/staff compensation, do you favor or oppose this idea?

	All Teachers 1984 %	All Teachers 1989 %	U.S. Public 1984* %	Elementary Teachers 1984 %	Elementary Teachers 1989 %	High School Teachers 1984 %	High School Teachers 1989 %
Favor	24	24	42	23	23	24	23
Oppose	72	72	52	72	74	72	71
No opinion	4	5	6	5	3	4	7

(Not all columns add to 100% because of rounding.)

*The phrase, "aside from the question of teacher/staff compensation," was omitted when this question was asked of the public in 1984.

Censoring School-Sponsored Publications

In 1988 the U.S. Supreme Court, in the *Hazelwood School District* v. *Kuhlmeier* decision, ruled that "educators do not offend the First Amendment by exercising editorial control over the style and content of student speech in school-sponsored expressive activities so long as their actions are reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns." Without overturning the famous *Tinker* decision of 1969, whose main point was that students do not leave their constitutional rights outside the schoolhouse door, the 1988 decision has unquestionably given educators more authority. Both teachers and the general public approve of the High Court's ruling.

The question:

The U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled in favor of more authority for high school principals to censor school-sponsored student publications. Do you believe that this was a good ruling or a bad ruling?

	All Teachers 1989 %	Elementary Teachers 1989 %	High School Teachers 1989 %	U.S. Public 1988 %
Good ruling	69	66	71	59
Bad ruling	17	17	17	28
No opinion	14	17	12	13

Have the Schools Improved Recently?

Most teachers are *not* convinced that schools in their communities have improved over the last five years, a period of much talk about and considerable action directed toward reform. But more teachers see improvement than see deterioration. High school teachers in particular tend to feel that there hasn't been much change. The public pretty much agrees with teachers on this question. The chief difference is that members of the public are more willing to say that they don't really know.

The question:

Would you say that, over the last five years, the public schools in your community have improved, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?

	All Teachers 1989 %	Elementary Teachers 1989 %	High School Teachers 1989 %	U.S. Public 1988 %
Improved	36	39	30	29
Gotten worse	25	24	27	19
Stayed about the same	38	36	42	37
Don't know	1	1	1	15

Research Procedure

Findings in this survey are based on mail interviews with a representative sample of teachers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. These findings are compared, in many cases, with those of a similar survey conducted by the Gallup Organization for Phi Delta Kappa in 1984. They are also compared with findings of polls of public attitudes toward the public schools conducted by the Gallup Organization for Phi Delta Kappa in recent years.

For the current survey, a sample of 2,000 teachers was selected from a list provided by Market Data Retrieval of Chicago to reflect the total national population of public school teachers. The sample was stratified proportionately by region and by grade level taught.

Questionnaires were mailed to the 2,000 teachers on 10 January 1989. Two questionnaires were returned as undeliverable, producing an effective mailing of 1,998 questionnaires.

The final return was 830 completed interviews — for a return rate of 41.5%. This is almost identical with the return rate for the 1984 survey. The sample of 830 respondents has a margin of error estimated to be approximately plus or minus 4% at the 0.95 confidence level. That is, in 19 of 20 samples of this size, the sample responses reported here that lie between 30% and 70% would differ by no more than plus or minus 4% from the true values. For those responses reported here that are less than 30% or greater than 70%, the estimated error is smaller still.

These estimates of error are due to sampling error alone. Other forms of error, such as nonresponse or questionnaire bias, are not included in these estimates of error.

In the 1984 survey, to be certain that the attitudes of nonrespondents were not significantly different from those of respondents, the Gallup Organization conducted a telephone survey with a sample of 100 teachers who had not answered the mail survey. The results of this telephone survey closely paralleled the mail sample, both in attitudes revealed and in socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Because of these findings, no telephone follow-up was considered necessary for the 1989 survey.

This year, through the courtesy of Alec Gallup, the Gallup Organization provided consultation and advice in the conduct of the survey. However, all tabulations were done by the Center for Survey Research at Indiana University, under the direction of John Kennedy.

Composition of the Sample

Of the 830 respondents to this survey, 64.6% (534) were female and 35.4% (293) were male. Three did not identify themselves by sex.

Eight percent of the respondents were in the 20-29 age bracket, 29.9% in the 30-39 age bracket, 40.5% in the 40-49 age bracket, and 19.1% in the 50-59 age bracket; 2.5% identified themselves as over age 60. Three did not specify age.

Thirty-nine percent indicated that they hold a bachelor's as their highest earned degree, 52% a master's, 7.6% a specialist's degree, and 1.6% a doctorate. Three respondents did not supply this information.

Of those who responded, 57.2% reported that they teach at the elementary (K-8) level, while 32.7% reported that they teach in a secondary school. Some 4.2% checked both elementary and secondary, while 5.8% specified "other."

With the exception of four respondents who did not supply information, the following table shows "approximate annual income from teaching":

Income	%
$10,000-$14,999	1.1
$15,000-$19,999	9.3
$20,000-$24,999	23.8
$25,000-$29,999	20.3
$30,000-$34,999	24.5
$35,000-$39,999	11.6
$40,000-$44,999	5.4
$45,000 or over	3.9

For purposes of the survey, the U.S. was divided into four regions: East, Midwest, South, and West. There were 163 responses from the East, 264 from the Midwest, 249 from the South, and 149 from the West. Data were missing in five cases.

How to Order the Poll

The minimum order for reprints of this published version of the Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa teacher poll is 25 copies for $10. Additional copies are 25 cents each. This price includes postage for parcel post delivery. Where possible, enclose a check or money order.

If faster delivery is desired, do not include a remittance with your order. You will be billed at the above rates plus any additional cost involved in the method of delivery.

This *Kappan* version of the teacher poll previews a more detailed report to be published by Phi Delta Kappa in July 1989 under the title, *The Second Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa Survey of Public School Teacher Opinion*. A prepublication price of $5 (including postage) has been established for orders received before July 15. (Payment *must* accompany orders at this special price.) After July 15, the price will rise to $7.50. To order, write to Publications, Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402. K

Illustration by Susanna Spann

Administrator/Student Ratios In Large School Districts

The idea of streamlining headquarters staff is spreading to school districts, Mr. Ornstein points out. In districts with declining enrollments, however, efficient administrator/student ratios will be difficult to achieve without spilling some blood and making some difficult choices.

BY ALLAN C. ORNSTEIN

EVER SINCE the lean, mean recessionary period of the early 1980s, when interest rates topped 20%, U.S. corporations have slimmed down in many ways – from selling off unprofitable businesses and closing old plants to cutting corporate and regional staffs. In an effort to reduce controllable expenses and increase efficiency, many corporations have done away with vast numbers of corporate managers – including a host of planners, specialists, and analysts.

Life in the new "minimalist" corporation is tougher but simpler: decisions are quick, accountability is clear, and most people seem to work harder. The fact that large staffs are no longer fashionable in corporations is a direct consequence of budgetary restraints in combination with a desire to increase profits. Corporations are run by the bottom line, and today that adds up to smaller staffs – as small as one manager at corporate headquarters for every 5,000 employees.*

*Thomas Moore, "Goodbye, Corporate Staff," *Fortune*, 21 December 1987, pp. 65, 68, 76.

Illustration by Guy Lawrence

Trying to agree on the size of the staff required at each corporate center leads to long debates about the number of administrators and supervisors needed for efficient, economical functioning. As companies scale back their corporate hierarchies, the work force of the central office has been redefined. Multiple layers of staff have disappeared. Decisions no longer take months – or even years – as they did when each department conducted its own review and added its own recommendations to be considered by the next level.

The idea of streamlining headquarters staff is spreading to school districts, where the atmosphere is conducive to budget trimming. Many school board members spend their days in the corporate world, and many school districts – faced with uncertain levels of funding from federal and state governments – are seriously reviewing their budgets. School personnel are being asked to cut needless spending, meet austere budgets, and increase productivity. To save money, many teachers were laid off during the 1970s and early 1980s. The central administration is the next likely target.

Budget-conscious school board members prefer the idea of saving money by streamlining the central office staff to the idea of asking their communities to pay higher property taxes. Given the fact that fewer adults have children in school and that our aging population now requires a larger share of public money to pay for social and medical services, school boards that haven't already done so will soon be forced to thin out the ranks at school headquarters to reduce spending.

This reality prompted me to survey school districts with 50,000 or more students to obtain information on the ratio of central administrators to student enrollments. Responses were received from 51 of the 62 large school districts surveyed.

The responses revealed that the ratio of managerial staff members in central offices to students enrolled ranges from one administrator/supervisor per 1,650 students to one administrator/supervisor per 161 students. The average ratio was one manager per 561 students, and the median ratio was 1:578.

Eleven school districts have 750 or more students per administrator (see Table 1). Ten school districts, which are not identified by name, have 250 or fewer students per administrator.

The 16 school districts in my sample that enroll 100,000 or more students average 579 students per administrator, while the 35 districts serving between 50,000 and 99,999 students average 561 students per administrator. This difference in student/administrator ratios may reflect the fact that larger school districts are located in more densely populated areas and tend to build larger schools that house more students. Thus they have fewer administrators in the school per student, and this may indirectly affect the number of central managers.

School personnel are being asked to cut spending and increase productivity.

The 25 city school districts that responded to the survey had an average of only 522 students per administrator; the 26 county school districts that responded had an average of 609 students per administrator. The difference between city and county districts may stem from the politics involved in operating many city school districts. When the city schools respond to pressure to hire minority administrators, the nonminority administrators don't give up their jobs. As a result, administrative payrolls continue to grow.

School districts in the West seem more efficient than districts in other regions, and those in the Midwest and in the Northeast seem to be the least efficient. The seven school districts in the West that responded to my survey averaged 1,131 students per administrator, a ratio that compares well with the 528 students per administrator in the nine districts in the Southwest, the 484 students per administrator in the 19 districts in the South, the 458 students per administrator in the eight districts in the Midwest, and the 420 students per administrator in the eight districts in the Northeast.

In six of the seven school districts surveyed in the West, student enrollments have been increasing for the last 10 years. Thus their efficiency ratios continue to improve, as long as the number of central administrators remains the same or does not increase at the same rate as student enrollment. In 14 of the 15 districts in the Midwest and the Northeast, enrollments have been decreasing for the last 10 years. If the number of central administrators remains the same – or if attrition is slower than the decline in enrollments – then efficiency ratios will worsen.

Another factor that may encourage lean central office staffing in the West, especially in Nevada and Utah, may be a history of tighter budgets and a frontier tradition of getting by with less. Finally, the older school districts of the Midwest and the Northeast may have older, more career-oriented (and pension-minded) administrators. The West, the Southwest, and the South are growing regions and might attract younger, more mobile educators with fewer roots. Such factors would give districts in these regions greater flexibility in staffing central offices.

TABLE 1.
Most Efficient Student/Administrator Ratios in School Districts with 50,000 or More Students (1988)

	Student Enrollment	Student/Administrator Ratio
Granite, Utah	74,278	1,650.0:1
Clark County, Nev.	100,039	1,539.0:1
Jordan, Utah	61,995	1,512.0:1
Mesa, Ariz.	59,304	1,446.0:1
Indianapolis, Ind.	50,437	1,401.0:1
Los Angeles, Calif.	592,273	1,343.0:1
Nashville-Davidson County, Tenn.	66,325	908.5:1
Jefferson Parish, La.	57,856	890.0:1
Tucson, Ariz.	56,475	818.5:1
Chicago, Ill.	419,537	808.5:1
Dade County, Fla.	254,235	756.5:1

ALLAN C. ORNSTEIN is a professor of education at Loyola University, Chicago.

We come now to some hard questions. Why does New York City – the largest school district in the U.S., with 940,000 students – need one district-level administrator for every 161 students, while Los Angeles – the second-largest school district, with 592,273 students – operates with one district-level administrator for every 1,343 students? One reason may be a difference in reporting the number of administrators (which applies to all the figures in this article). Another reason seems to be that the New York City schools are committed to a highly decentralized system that requires a large number of administrators to run it. There may also be the political need to create jobs for minority school administrators, while preserving the administrative positions of white administrators. Are these reasons sufficient to justify the cost?

We also need to ask questions that apply to large school districts in general: To what extent do high student/administrator ratios – ratios that I have labeled as more efficient – represent cost-effectiveness and efficiency? And to what extent do such ratios connote budgetary restraints and low levels of spending? At what point do large numbers of administrators become costly, cumbersome, and an obstacle to decision making? What is the optimal number of school administrators in relation to the number of students? How many associate and assistant superintendents are necessary? What should be the size of their support staffs?

My own conclusion is that school districts should aim for a ratio of one administrator per 1,000 to 1,200 students. At present, only six of the 51 school districts that responded to my survey have achieved this level of efficiency. But as budget-minded school officials look at administrative jobs, administrator/student ratios in many districts are likely to improve.

In school districts with increasing student enrollments, the target ratio can be reached through attrition. In school districts with declining student enrollments, the target ratio will be difficult to reach without spilling some blood in the central office and without making some difficult choices. Although a staff reduction program may be directly related to economic factors, deciding who gets eliminated is a political consideration, and it can have legal implications. It will be up to moderate voices and rational groups to prevent radical surgery and harmful side-effects. K

The Paradox of Decentralizing Schools:

Lessons from Business, Government, And the Catholic Church

Schooling has much to gain from unleashing the creative energies of teachers, principals, and parents, Mr. Murphy says. But decentralization needs to be accompanied by forceful central action.

BY JEROME T. MURPHY

IT IS THE YEAR 2000, and the school decentralizers are in the driver's seat. During the past decade, they have persuaded a bruised and confused public that the centralization of school districts has gone too far and that bottom-up management is the key to school performance. Like Black & Decker Dustbusters, the new reforms – school-based management, shared decision making, teacher empowerment, restructured schools – have swept the nation.[1] School superintendents, whose nerve failed them in the 1990s, have bowed to pressure from principals, teachers, and reformers to reduce central controls. School districts have achieved, to use Gerald Grant's term, "radical decentralization."[2]

It is the year 2000, and the evaluations are beginning to roll in. Critics claim that decentralization has gone too far. School systems have become more fragmented and have lost the ability to coordinate actions in pursuit of common goals. School board members complain that school performance is shockingly uneven: strong schools have thrived under the new autonomy, but weak schools have languished, and some have become captives of parochial interests. Researchers for the RAND Corporation document the growing disparities in school resources, teacher quality, and student outcomes. Advocacy groups charge that schools serving poor children are being neglected. As the reform movement begins to sputter, the decentralizers are pursued by a new wave of hard-nosed centralizers. And so goes the soap opera, "As the Pendulum Swings."

Is this depressing portrait of the year 2000 realistic? Are there ways to avoid staging this soap opera?

I think that such disappointing results are not only possible but probable – assuming, of course, that radical decentralization really catches on.[3] One reason is that a basic flaw skews the thinking of many decentralizers: to wit, one must choose between centralization and decentralization and stick with that choice. This either/or thinking leads to the wide swings of the pendulum and to the accompanying disillusionment and could help to derail some fundamental organizational reforms that are needed to meet today's high expectations for the schools.

In what follows, I draw on some histor-

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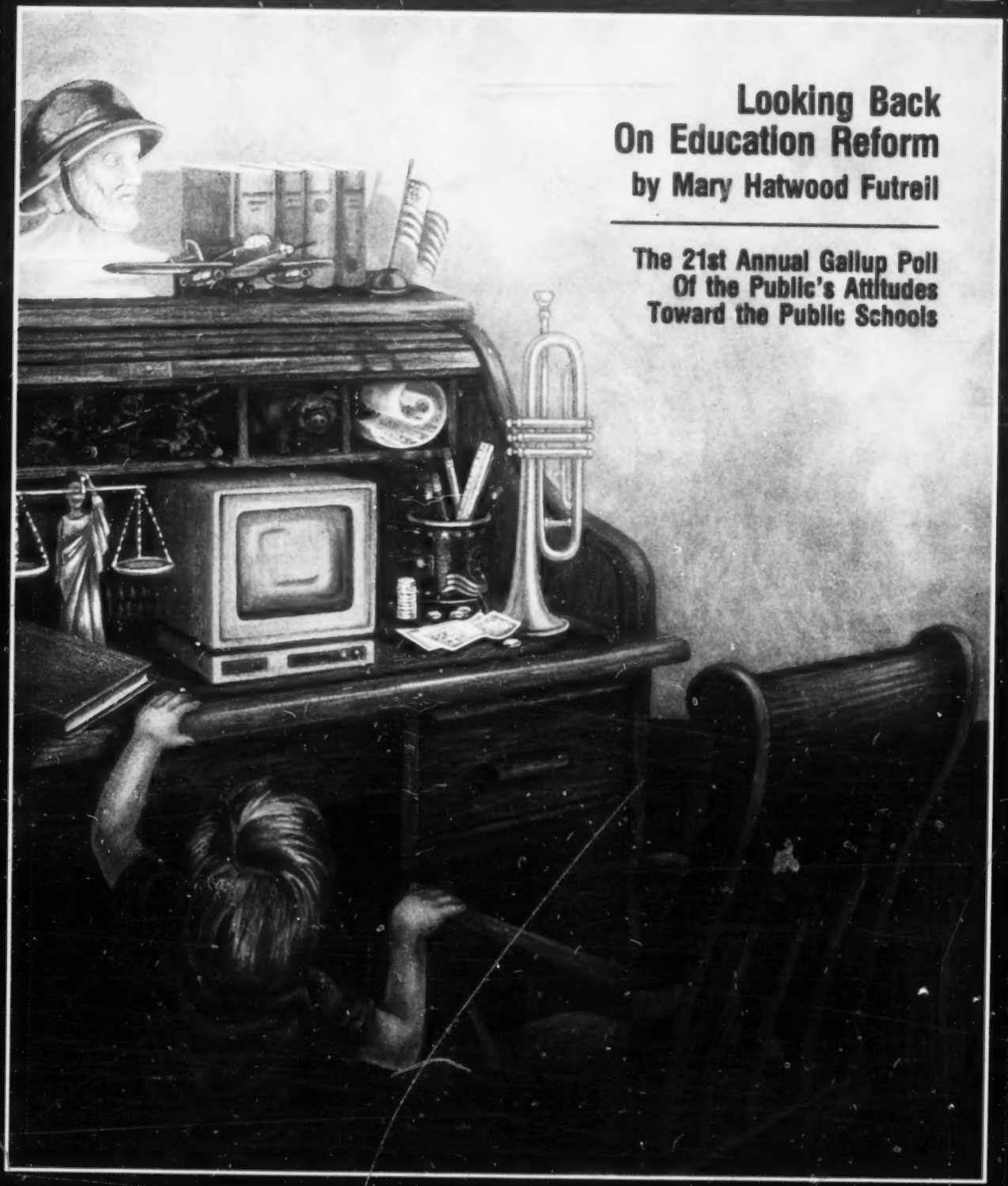
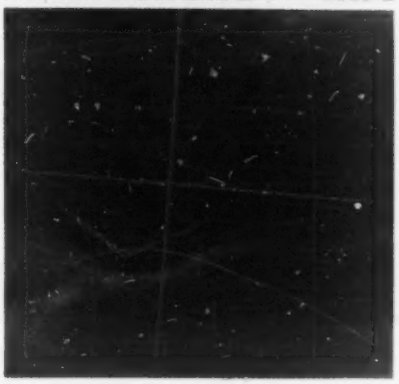


Looking Back On Education Reform

by Mary Hatwood Futrell

The 21st Annual Gallup Poll Of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools



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Cover Illustration: Dianne McElwain

No Matter How You Slice It

DICHOTOMIZING often enables us to think about complex topics in fresh and interesting ways. And, since education is as complex as any human endeavor, educators are masters of dichotomy. Cognitive/affective, traditional/progressive, centralized/decentralized, competitive/cooperative – the list grows continually. Two articles in this month's *Kappan* are cases in point.

Mary Hatwood Futrell leads off with a retrospective look at school reform since 1983, when she took office as president of the National Education Association just months after the release of *A Nation at Risk*. In Futrell's view, early reform efforts following the publication of that report sprang from a view of education as an *instrumental* value – a means of furthering such national interests as military security, economic competitiveness in the international marketplace, and harmony among disparate groups in an increasingly pluralistic population.

Americans, Futrell says, are only now coming to view education as an *intrinsic* value, as well – as a means of preparing tomorrow's adults to meet *ethical* imperatives. The world of tomorrow, she warns us, will "demand zealous compassion as much as competitive zeal." Add *instrumental/intrinsic* to the list.

By contrast, the dichotomy on which Thomas McDaniel focuses has to do with conflicting metaphors. During the Reagan Presidency, according to McDaniel, a tall-in-the-saddle, militaristic metaphor colored our attempts to reform the schools. But now a kinder, gentler – if you will, a more feminine – metaphor could help us to mend tears in the social fabric. Add *masculine/feminine* to the list.

The July 1989 issue of *Harper's* alluded to yet another dichotomy that demands our attention. In its "Readings" column, that magazine published an essay by Richard Rorty, adapted from an address he delivered last January to the American Association of Colleges. Rorty argues that the *goals* of education are dual. The primary and secondary schools are charged with socializing students: getting them "to take over the moral and political common sense of the society as it is." But, according to Rorty, students who go on to attend "reasonably good colleges" then learn to be "skeptical about the current consensus." In other words, educators socialize first and then work to remove the limits that socialization imposes. Add *socialization/individuation* to the list.

"With a bit of help," Rorty says, college students "will start noticing everything that is paltry and mean and unfree in their surroundings. With luck, the best of them will succeed in altering the conventional wisdom, so that the next generation is socialized in a somewhat different way than they themselves were socialized." To hope that this way will be "perceptibly different is to hope that our country never becomes satisfied with itself," he concludes.

I confess to misgivings about Rorty's implicit – and elitist – assumption that only the college-educated ought to be able to stand up to their own pasts. *Socialization/individuation* is a dichotomy that probably ought to influence the thinking of teachers at every level.

Clearly though, no matter how you slice it, education is the one best hope for our individual and collective progress and well-being. That's something to bear in mind as we head into a new school year. Oh, by the way, add *individual/collective* to the list. – PBG

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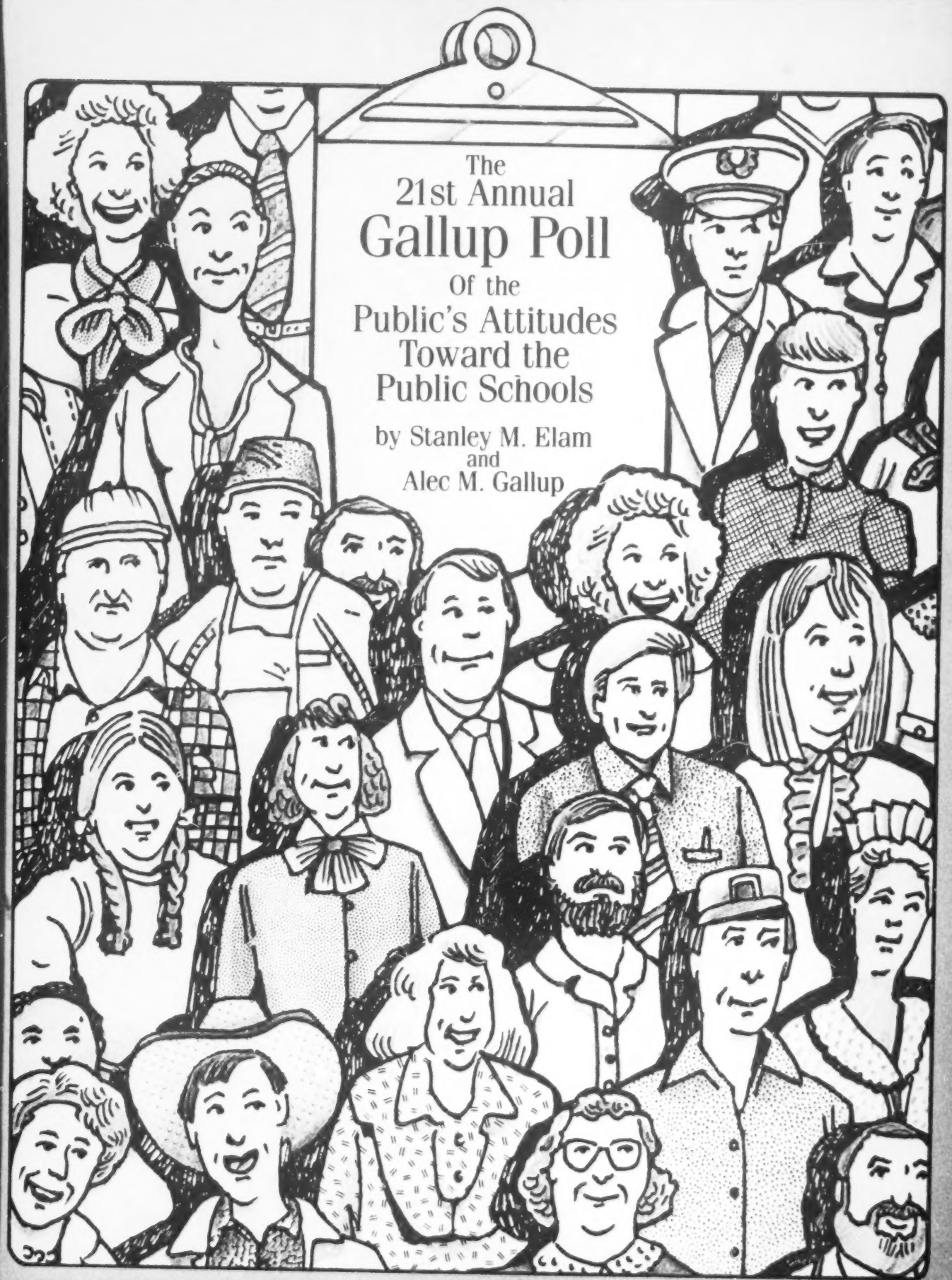


The 21st Annual Gallup Poll Of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

by Stanley M. Elam
and
Alec M. Gallup

Illustration by Roger T. Dr Mah

THE PUBLIC is ready for tradition-shattering changes in the policies that govern U.S. public schools. This interpretation of the results of the 21st annual Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa poll of public attitudes is inescapable. Among the findings that support it are these:

1. The public favors, by a 2-1 margin, allowing students and their parents to choose which public schools in their communities the students will attend. This is an aspect of the so-called parental choice movement, and it is already state law in Minnesota, Arkansas, and Iowa, while several other states are considering it in one form or another. Parental choice is also a centerpiece of the federal education policy articulated by the Bush Administration. The idea is especially popular among nonwhites and younger adults. Many people think that the option to choose their schools would improve students' satisfaction and achievement. Apparently, respondents to the 1989 survey are not much impressed by the argument that many schools would suffer from this tradition-breaking change.

2. A consensus appears to be building for more uniformity in public school programs. In the 1989 survey the public supports, by a substantial margin, the idea of a "standardized national curriculum," as well as national standards and goals for the public schools and nationally standardized tests to measure the achievement of those standards and goals. People seem willing to trust educators, perhaps working with lay panels, to establish these goals and prepare tests to measure their achievement.

3. A convincing 83% of the public think that more should be done to improve the quality of public schools in poorer states and communities. By a 2-1 margin, they say that they are even willing to pay more taxes to make this improvement possible.

4. The public favors (by 75% to 18%) reducing class size in the early grades to as few as 15 pupils. By a 68% to 25% margin, respondents say that they are willing to pay higher taxes to fund such reductions.

5. The public favors (by 71% to 21%) after-school and summer programs for students whose parents work. They are divided, however, on whether these programs should be financed by taxation, by parent contributions, or by some combination of the two.

6. People are deeply concerned about what they perceive to be the declining quality of the nation's inner-city schools; 74% think it is "very important" to improve them, and substantial majorities would be willing to pay more taxes to expand Head Start programs, to screen young children for health problems, and to provide day care for the children of working parents.

7. An overwhelming 83% of the respondents favor more state and federal assistance for high school graduates who have the ability and desire to attend college but cannot afford to do so. Respondents want more scholarships and grants, more work/study programs, and more low-interest loans.

Public approval of change was not indiscriminate in the current poll, however. For example, many people remain skeptical about the desirability of increasing the amount of time students spend in school, whether by lengthening the school day or the school year. In addition, rather than allow students to drop out of school as soon as they meet certain standards of knowledge and skill, the largest number of respondents would prefer to have students remain through high school graduation.

Two questions are standard in the Gallup education surveys. First, what are the biggest problems with which the schools in this community must deal? And second, what grade would you give the public schools in this community — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

The public perception of local school problems and the ratings given public schools in the 1989 survey vary little from last year. Use of drugs, lack of student discipline, and lack of proper financial support again head the list of problems. The proportion of poll respondents who gave their local schools grades of A or B rose from 40% last year to 43% in this year's survey, up from a low of 31% in 1983, the year in which *A Nation at Risk* was published. That report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education warned of "a rising tide of mediocrity" and triggered the current reform movement.

Details of the 1989 Gallup education poll follow.

Support for Parental Choice

Among various proposals for school restructuring being considered by the nation's policy makers, one of the most frequently mentioned is parental choice. For this reason, four questions were asked in the current poll that sought to measure public attitudes toward the idea and toward the reasoning behind it.

Majority support for parental choice appears in all demographic groups and in all geographic areas, although that support is somewhat stronger among nonwhites (67%) and younger adults (67%) than among whites (59%) and persons aged 50 and over (51%). People in eastern states regard parental choice less favorably than those in the West (53% to 64%).

Half of the respondents to the current poll believe that parental choice would improve some schools while hurting others; 21% think that parental choice would improve *all* schools. Only 14% think that choice would hurt *all* schools.

Opponents argue that parental choice might benefit students of caring and ambitious parents but that the children of apathetic parents — those already most at risk — would be the ultimate losers as the quality of poorer schools declined further. But many poll respondents felt that student achievement and satisfaction would, on the average, be higher than at present.

STANLEY M. ELAM (Indiana University Chapter) is contributing editor of the Phi Delta Kappan. *He was* Kappan *editor from 1956 through 1980 and has been coordinating Phi Delta Kappa's polling program since his retirement. ALEC M. GALLUP is co-chairman, with George Gallup, Jr., of the Gallup Organization, Princeton, N.J.*

Illustrations by Roger T. Dr Mark

The first question:

Do you favor or oppose allowing students and their parents to choose which public schools in this community the students attend, regardless of where they live?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	60	58	64	69
Oppose	31	33	29	22
Don't know	9	9	7	10

A question on parental choice was asked in the Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa survey conducted in 1987. However, the wording was somewhat different, and this difference probably accounts for the somewhat different response. The 1987 question:

Do you think that parents in this community should or should not have the right to choose which local schools their children attend?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	71	68	78	81
No	20	20	21	15
Don't know	9	12	3	4

Further breakdowns for the 1989 question:

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	60	31	9
Sex			
Men	60	32	8
Women	61	30	9
Race			
White	59	33	8
Nonwhite	67	22	11
Age			
18 - 29 years	67	24	9
30 - 49 years	64	29	7
50 and over	51	36	11
Community Size			
1 million and over	59	30	11
500,000 - 999,999	52	34	14
50,000 - 499,999	64	31	5
2,500 - 49,999	64	33	3
Under 2,500	59	31	10
Education			
College	60	33	7
Graduate	58	36	6
Incomplete	61	32	7
High school	62	28	10
Graduate	60	29	11
Incomplete	65	26	9
Grade school	54	33	13
Income			
$40,000 and over	62	32	6
$30,000 - $39,999	64	29	7
$20,000 - $29,999	59	33	8
$10,000 - $19,999	60	28	12
Under $10,000	61	30	9
Region			
East	53	39	8
Midwest	60	31	9
South	63	27	10
West	64	27	9

The second question:

What effect do you think allowing students and their parents to choose the students' schools would have on the public schools in this community? Do you think it would improve all the schools, hurt all the schools, or would it improve some and hurt others?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Improve all schools	21	19	24	25
Hurt all schools	14	14	14	13
Improve some, hurt others	51	51	51	55
Don't know	14	16	11	7

The third question:

If students and their parents were allowed to choose the students' schools, do you think student achievement in the public schools in this community, on the average, would be higher than it is now, lower than it is now, or wouldn't there be much difference?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Higher	40	39	42	51
Lower	10	11	8	8
Not much difference	42	42	43	33
Don't know	8	8	7	8

The fourth question:

If students and their parents were allowed to choose the students' schools, do you think student satisfaction with the public schools in this community, on the average, would be higher than it is now, lower than it is now, or wouldn't there be much difference?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Higher	49	48	53	57
Lower	7	7	6	8
Not much difference	37	38	35	32
Don't know	7	7	6	3

Support for National Goals, Standards, Curriculum, and Testing

Public opinion in these annual polls has generally supported the American tradition of local control of schools. For example, a 2-1 majority said in 1978 that federal regulations were more likely to hinder than to help the local schools. In 1982 a majority of respondents (54%) said that in the future they would like to see less federal influence on local educational programs. When the question was repeated in 1986, the results were almost identical. These sentiments may still hold, but the current poll reveals that a majority of respondents believe there should be a national public school curriculum, national goals and standards, and a national testing program to measure the achievement of those goals and standards.

These attitudes appear in the responses to several questions that were preceded by queries to determine whether respondents understood that we currently have no unified national goals, standards, or testing. People who said that they favored national goals and standards were also asked what groups should establish them. The responses show that the public places considerable confidence in professional educators to do so.

The first question:

As you understand it, do achievement standards and goals for the public schools differ from community to community and from state to state, or is there a single set of national achievement standards and goals that apply to all the public schools in the country?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Different goals	61	60	63	72
Single set of goals	24	23	26	12
Don't know	15	17	11	16

The second question:

Would you favor or oppose requiring the public schools in this community to conform to national achievement standards and goals?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	70	68	72	80
Oppose	19	19	20	14
Don't know	11	13	8	6

The third question (asked of those who favor national standards and goals):

Which one of the following groups do you think should establish these national achievement standards and goals: the President and Congress, professional educators, a consensus of state governors, or a panel of parents and other laypeople?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Professional educators	61	61	61	59
Panel of parents and other laypeople	20	19	22	23
The President and Congress	5	6	3	8
A consensus of state governors	3	3	2	2
Other	3	3	4	*
None	1	1	*	2
Don't know	7	7	8	6

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The fourth question:

As you understand it, do public school curriculum requirements — that is, the subjects required — differ from state to state and from community to community, or is there a standardized national curriculum that is required in all public schools in the country?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Differ	55	55	54	64
Standardized	29	28	33	23
Don't know	16	17	13	13

The fifth question:

Would you favor or oppose requiring the public schools in this community to use a standardized national curriculum?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	69	67	74	75
Oppose	21	21	20	18
Don't know	10	12	6	7

The sixth question:

As you understand it, do testing programs to determine the academic achievement of students differ from state to state and from community to community, or are there standardized testing programs that are required in all public schools in the country?

Illustrations by Roger T. De Mark

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Differ	38	40	35	37
Standardized	42	39	49	49
Don't know	20	21	16	14

The seventh question:

Would you favor or oppose requiring the public schools in this community to use standardized national testing programs to measure the academic achievement of students?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	77	75	81	80
Oppose	14	15	13	17
Don't know	9	10	6	3

Remedying Inequality in Educational Opportunity

One of the longest-running scandals in U.S. public education is the inequality of educational opportunity resulting from the unequal distribution of economic resources among the governmental units that support schools. By and large, court actions designed to correct these educational inequities (e.g., *Serrano* and *Rodriguez*) have failed. Over the past decade or so, many states have taken legislative action to improve their equalization formulas, but district-to-district and state-to-state inequities persist.

A convincing majority of the public (83%) believes that more should be done to improve the quality of the public schools in poorer states and communities. Of this 83%, 62% (just over half of all respondents) say they would be willing to pay more taxes for the purpose.

The first question:

The quality of the public schools varies greatly from community to community and from state to state because of differences in the amount of taxes taken in to support the schools. Do you think more should be done to improve the quality of the public schools in the poorer states and in the poorer communities or not?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	83	82	86	85
No	9	9	8	7
Don't know	8	9	6	8

The second question (asked of those who think more should be done):

Would you be willing or not willing to pay more taxes to improve the quality of the public schools in the poorer states and poorer communities?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Willing	62	62	62	58
Not willing	30	29	32	27
Don't know	8	9	6	15

Reducing Class Size

Although the findings of research remain unclear, most laypeople believe the broad generalization that students achieve much more when class sizes are small. They are highly supportive of new state initiatives designed to reduce class size to as few as 15 pupils in the early grades.

The first question:

In some school districts, the typical class has as many as 35 students; in other districts, only 20. With regard to the achievement or progress of students, do you think small classes make a great deal of difference, little difference, or no difference at all?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Great deal of difference	79	77	82	88
Little difference	13	14	12	8
No difference	6	6	5	5
Don't know	2	3	1	1

	National Totals		
	1989 %	1988 %	1973 %
Great deal of difference	79	71	79
Little difference	13	21	11
No difference	6	6	6
Don't know	2	2	4

The second question:

A few states have started programs in the early grades to reduce class size to as few as 15 pupils. Would you favor or oppose such programs in the public schools in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	75	73	81	82
Oppose	18	19	14	10
Already have such a program	1	1	1	1
Don't know	6	7	4	7

The third question (asked of those who favor restricting class size to as few as 15 students in the early grades):

Would you be willing to pay higher taxes to fund such programs or not?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	68	66	72	71
No	25	26	24	20
Don't know	7	8	4	9

Support for After-School and Summer Programs

A sizable majority (71%) of respondents favor more after-school and summer programs for students whose parents work. Not many people, however, believe that these programs should be supported by increased taxes alone. They prefer some combination of government and parent contributions.

The first question:

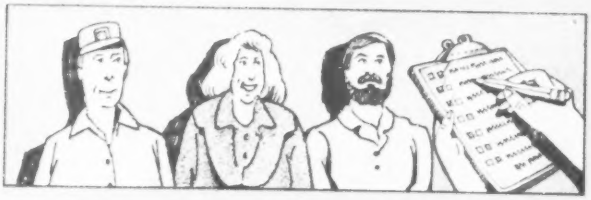
Would you favor or oppose having more after-school and summer programs in the local public schools for those students whose parents work?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	71	70	77	69
Oppose	21	21	18	27
Don't know	8	9	5	4

The second question (asked of those who favor more after-school and summer programs):

How do you think such programs should be paid for — by increased taxes, by contributions from the parents of those student involved, or by both increased taxes and parent contributions?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Increased taxes	15	16	14	11
Parent contributions	23	24	20	23
Increased taxes/parent contributions	57	55	60	63
Don't know	5	5	6	3



School-Site Management And Accountability

Some advocates of school restructuring would give building principals more authority for the operation of their schools and then hold them responsible for results. The public favors such proposals.

The question:

It has been suggested that school principals be given more authority to determine who will teach in their schools and how the schools will operate. In return, a principal given such authority would be held accountable for the school's performance; that is, after several years he or she would be rewarded if the school was educationally successful but replaced if the school did not meet established standards. Would you favor or oppose the adoption of this program in the public schools in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	63	62	64	64
Oppose	26	26	26	24
Don't know	11	12	10	12

Because a few major school districts are experimenting with giving additional authority to parents, the parents of public school students were asked how much say they should have over several aspects of school operation. They expressed the opinion that parents should indeed have more say than they now do, particularly over the allocation of funds.

The question:

Do you feel that parents of public school students should have more say, less say, or do they have about the right amount of say regarding the following areas in public schools?

Illustrations by Roger T. Dr Mah

	More Say 1989 %	Less Say 1989 %	Right Amount 1989 %	Don't Know 1989 %
Allocation of school funds	59	10	27	4
Curriculum (i.e., the courses offered)	53	9	36	2
Selection and hiring of administrators	46	14	37	3
Books and instructional materials	43	13	41	3
Selection and hiring of teachers	41	17	38	4
Teacher and administrator salaries	39	17	39	5
Books placed in the school libraries	38	15	44	3

Criteria for Leaving School

Schooling to a certain age is required by law in every state, and the public is relatively well-informed about the requirements. However, there is little agreement about when a student *should* be allowed to drop out of school — at a minimum age, upon graduation from high school, or when certain standards of knowledge and skill have been met. Minimum age turns out to be the least-approved criterion. Three questions in the current poll probed the public's knowledge and opinion on this subject.

The first question:

Do you happen to know when students can legally drop out of school in this state? Does it depend on a minimum age, on whether the student has graduated from high school, or on the student's ability to meet certain standards of knowledge and skill?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Minimum age	70	70	71	65
Graduated from high school	6	6	6	5
Can meet standards	6	6	7	11
Don't know	18	18	16	19

The second question (asked of those who were aware of the minimum-age criterion):

Do you happen to know the minimum age at which a student can legally drop out of school in this state?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	87	87	87	83
Don't know	13	13	13	17

The third question:

If you could choose one of these three plans, when do you think students should be allowed to drop out of school in this state? When they reach a minimum age, when they have graduated from high school, or when they have met certain standards of knowledge and skill?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Graduated from high school	45	46	45	40
Met certain standards	38	36	42	41
Minimum age	13	13	10	13
Don't know	4	5	3	6

Educational Influences on the Young

Educators often debate the strength and value of various educational influences on the young. A two-part question intended to reveal public perceptions of four of these influences was devised for the current poll. The public agrees that family influence is most important, as well as most positive, but the schools are a close second. The influence of peers and of television rank third and fourth in both strength and value. Television — a favorite scapegoat — gets a very low rating as a "positive influence."

The first question:

In addition to school, young people receive their education from a number of different sources. As I read off these sources, one at a time, would you indicate how important an influence you think each source is on a student by mentioning a number between zero and 10 — the higher the number, the more important the influence; and the lower the number, the less important.

	Most Important Influence (Ratings of 9 and 10 only) %
The student's family	63
School	47
The student's peers	41
Television	32

The second question:

Now, as I read off each of these sources, one at a time, would you tell me how *positive* an influence you think each source is on a student by mentioning a number between zero and 10 — the higher the number, the more positive the influence; and the lower the number, the less positive.

	Most Positive Influence (Ratings of 9 and 10 only) %
The student's family	53
School	39
The student's peers	24
Television	13

Why People Prize Education

These polls have repeatedly shown how important people believe education to be for success in life. To reveal detailed reasons why people want their children to receive an education, an open-ended question first asked in 1986 was repeated this year. The pragmatic bent of the American mind is immediately apparent in the responses. A primary concern for most parents is that their children be able to get good jobs and achieve financial security, and they believe that education will make these things possible. They consider knowledge for its own sake, good citizenship, and critical thinking skills secondary.

The question:

People have different reasons why they want their children to get an education. What are the chief reasons that come to your mind?

	National Totals	
	1989 %	1986 %
Job opportunities/better job	33	34
Preparation for life/better life	25	23
Financial security/economic stability	15	9
More knowledge	9	10
To get a better-paying job	8	8
To become self-sufficient (independent)	7	3
Personal development/self-realization	7	3
Teaches a person to think/learn/understand	6	3
Education is a necessity of life	5	12
To become better citizens	5	6
For a successful life	5	5
Specialized training/profession	4	4
To learn how to get along with people	4	4
To learn basic skills/fundamental learning skills	4	3
For better/easier life than parents	3	4
To contribute to society	2	3
To develop the ability to deal with adult responsibilities	2	2
Creates opportunities/opens doors	2	2
Social status	1	1
For happy/happier life	1	2
To develop basic individual values	1	1
To develop an understanding of and appreciation for culture	1	1
To develop self-discipline	1	1
Helps keep children out of trouble	*	1
To develop critical thinking skills	*	1
Miscellaneous	*	2
Don't know	2	4

*Less than one-half of 1%.
(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Longer School Day and Year

In 1982, when people were first asked about extending the public school year in their communities by 30 days or the school day by one hour, they opposed both suggestions. They opposed a longer year by 53% to 37%, and they opposed a longer day by 58% to 38%. By 1984 the opposition was somewhat weaker: 50% opposed to 44% in favor of the longer year; 52% opposed to 42% in favor of the longer day.

Although the question asked in this year's survey was phrased somewhat differently,* the responses suggest that opposition continues to dwindle. For the first time in the Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa polls, more people favor than oppose increasing the amount of time students in their communities spend in school, but no decisive majority opinion has emerged; 48% favor increased time in school, while 44% oppose it. Support is widely distributed among demographic and geographic groups, with some interesting differences. Men, for example, are somewhat more supportive of the idea than are women. People in larger cities are more likely to support it than are people in small communities or rural areas. And many more respondents in the West than in the East favor the idea.

The first question:

In some nations students spend about 25% more time in school than do students in the U.S. Would you favor or oppose increasing the amount of time that students in this community spend in school?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	48	48	46	54
Oppose	44	43	48	40
Don't know	8	9	6	6

*The 1982 and 1984 wording: "In some nations, students attend school as many as 240 days a year as compared to 180 days in the U.S. How do you feel about extending the public school year in this community by 30 days, making the school year about 210 days or 10 months long? How do you feel about extending the school day in the schools in this community by one hour?"

Illustrations by Roger T. Du Mont

Further breakdowns:

	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	48	44	8
Sex			
Men	50	41	9
Women	46	47	7
Race			
White	48	44	8
Nonwhite	49	43	8
Age			
18 - 29 years	38	53	9
30 - 49 years	47	46	7
50 and over	54	36	10
Community Size			
1 million and over	52	37	11
500,000 - 999,999	61	29	10
50,000 - 499,999	46	46	8
2,500 - 49,999	44	53	3
Under 2,500	42	52	6
Education			
College	53	39	8
Graduate	52	41	7
Incomplete	54	38	8
High school	43	49	8
Graduate	45	47	8
Incomplete	38	53	9
Grade school	47	44	9
Income			
$40,000 and over	50	44	6
$30,000 - $39,999	56	42	3
$20,000 - $29,999	47	46	7
$10,000 - $19,999	45	43	12
Under $10,000	41	51	8
Region			
East	48	41	11
Midwest	43	49	8
South	43	49	8
West	61	34	5

Respondents who favor increasing the amount of time students spend in school were asked which plan they prefer: more days, more hours per day, or Saturday morning classes. Sentiment was equally divided between the first two alternatives. Few people like the idea of Saturday morning classes.

The second question:

Which *one* of these plans for increasing the amount of time students spend in school would you prefer? Increasing the number of days in the school year, increasing the number of hours in the school day, or having school on Saturday mornings?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Increasing number of days	48	44	49	62
Increasing number of hours per day	45	47	44	27
Saturday morning school	6	5	6	11
Don't know	3	4	1	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Concern About Inner-City Schools

In general, the public is aware of the decline in the quality of education in the nation's inner cities in recent decades. People attach a high priority to improving inner-city schools; almost no one thinks that attacking this problem is unimportant.

The first question:

Thinking about the nation's inner-city schools, is it your impression that they have improved, gotten worse, or stayed about the same over the last several decades?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Improved	12	11	13	15
Gotten worse	57	58	56	53
Stayed about the same	20	19	20	22
Don't know	11	12	11	10

The second question:

How important do you think it is to improve the nation's inner-city schools — very important, fairly important, not very important, or not important at all?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Very important	74	71	83	83
Fairly important	19	21	14	14
Not very important	2	2	*	1
Not important at all	*	*	*	*
Don't know	5	6	3	2

*Less than one-half of 1%.

"I opined on your behalf today. You now support tax increases."

Grading the Public Schools

Public schools held their own in the ratings game this year. In the past five years, no statistically significant differences have appeared in the grades people give their local public schools or in the grades they give the public schools nationally.

Once again residents of large cities and nonwhites give schools the poorest grades. The decline in the quality of the schools that serve inner-city residents and minorities is a problem that should be high on the agenda of education policy makers.

Those who follow these polls are aware of three phenomena that recur annually in ratings tabulations. First, public school parents rate local schools more favorably than do other groups. Second, parents rate the school *their oldest child attends* even more favorably (about seven out of 10 of these ratings are either an A or a B). And third, the public as a whole rates its local public schools much more favorably than it rates the public schools nationwide.

A number of hypotheses are suggested by these facts. Perhaps the most obvious is that the more firsthand knowledge one has about the public schools (i.e., knowledge that does not come from the media), the better one likes them. This is a rare case of familiarity breeding respect.

The first question:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A & B	43	38	57	35
A	8	7	13	4
B	35	31	44	31
C	33	34	29	36
D	11	11	11	14
FAIL	4	5	2	7
Don't know	9	12	1	8

Ratings Given the Local Public Schools

	1989 %	1988 %	1987 %	1986 %	1985 %	1984 %	1983 %	1982 %	1981 %	1980 %	1979 %
A+B	43	40	43	41	43	42	31	37	36	35	34
A	8	9	12	11	9	10	6	8	9	10	8
B	35	31	31	30	34	32	25	29	27	25	26
C	33	34	30	28	30	35	32	33	34	29	30
D	11	10	9	11	10	11	13	14	13	12	11
FAIL	4	4	4	5	4	4	7	5	7	6	7
Don't know	9	12	14	15	13	8	17	11	10	18	18

Further breakdowns:

Grading the Local Public Schools

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	8	35	33	11	4	9
Sex						
Men	9	33	34	11	4	9
Women	8	35	32	11	4	10
Race						
White	9	36	32	10	4	9
Nonwhite	5	25	37	17	6	10
Age						
18 - 29 years	6	30	41	11	6	6
30 - 49 years	10	35	34	13	3	5
50 and over	7	37	27	9	4	16
Community Size						
1 million and over	8	28	33	14	7	10
500,000 - 999,999	8	27	36	14	4	11
50,000 - 499,999	8	39	32	9	2	10
2,500 - 49,999	7	43	27	13	3	7
Under 2,500	9	38	34	8	3	8
Education						
College	9	38	31	10	4	8
Graduate	13	40	28	8	3	8
Incomplete	7	37	32	11	5	8
High school	6	32	36	13	5	8
Graduate	6	34	36	14	4	6
Incomplete	7	28	35	10	6	14
Grade school	10	23	31	12	4	20
Income						
$40,000 and over	12	38	29	9	6	6
$30,000 - $39,999	11	32	40	8	2	7
$20,000 - $29,999	7	34	29	17	5	8
$10,000 - $19,999	6	34	38	8	4	10
Under $10,000	6	29	34	11	4	16
Region						
East	6	41	31	9	5	8
Midwest	10	30	36	13	4	7
South	9	32	33	11	4	11
West	7	35	31	12	4	11

The second question:

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A & B	22	22	24	15
A	2	2	2	1
B	20	20	22	14
C	47	46	47	52
D	15	15	15	14
FAIL	4	5	3	4
Don't know	12	12	11	15

The third question:

Using the A, B, C, D, FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?

	1989 %	1988 %	1987 %	1986 %	1985 %
A & B	71	70	69	65	71
A	25	22	28	28	23
B	46	48	41	37	48
C	19	22	20	25	19
D	5	3	5	4	5
FAIL	1	2	2	2	2
Don't know	4	3	4	3	3

Illustrations by Roger T. Dr Mah

Required Community Service

Community service for high school credit is sometimes offered as a corrective for the excessive self-centeredness of adolescents. President Bush has expressed his approval of the idea. When a question on this topic was first asked in the 1978 survey, the question implied that community service would be an option, not a requirement, and approval was very high (87% for, 8% against). In 1984 the same question brought a high level of approval (79% for, 16% against).

In the current poll, the public was asked if community service should be made a *requirement* for high school graduation. Although there is less support for the requirement than there was for the elective, a majority of respondents still approve (61% for, 30% against).

The question:

Would you favor or oppose a requirement that all students in the local public schools perform some kind of community service in order to graduate?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	61	60	63	69
Oppose	30	30	32	25
Don't know	9	10	5	6

Part-Time Work by High School Students

In a study sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa in 1986,* 70% of a representative sample of U.S. high school seniors reported that they held paid part-time jobs outside the home while attending school. Nearly 40% worked between 11 and 25 hours per week at these jobs, and 37% reported that they earned between $50 and $125 per week. The more paid hours students worked, the lower the grades they received in school. This finding neither proves nor implies a cause-and-effect relationship, but it is nonetheless disturbing.

What, if anything, should be the schools' response to such findings? To obtain the public's view, four questions were asked in the current survey. Some 43% of the respondents believe that holding part-time jobs hurts the academic achievement of high school students. (Interestingly, however, some 28% of the *parents* of public high school students think part-time jobs actually *help* achievement.) A solid majority would like to see school authorities make recommendations about the kind of out-of-school jobs that students should take and about the number of hours that they should devote to them. Half of the respondents think that the schools should offer courses at odd hours for the convenience of working students. And a very large majority think that schools should give academic credit in certain courses for the work experience of students.

The first question:

Many high school students now work long hours at jobs outside of school. What effect do you think this has on their academic achievement — do you think this usually hurts their academic achievement, usually helps their academic achievement, or doesn't it make much difference?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Hurts	43	43	45	42
Helps	29	28	28	36
Not much difference	23	23	23	18
Don't know	5	6	4	4

The second question:

Do you think the public high schools in this community should or should not make recommendations to high school students about the kinds of outside jobs they should take and the number of hours they should work?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	62	62	62	69
Should not	32	31	33	28
Don't know	6	7	5	3

The third question:

Do you think the public high schools in this community should or should not offer duplicate courses in the afternoon and at night for working students?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	50	50	50	54
Should not	43	42	45	36
Don't know	7	8	5	10

The fourth question:

Do you think the public high schools in this community should or should not give academic credit in certain areas for work experience?

*Terry F. White, *A Study of High School Seniors, 1986* (Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa, 1986).

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	75	73	79	70
Should not	19	19	19	24
Don't know	6	8	2	6

Improving Services for Poor Children

A majority of the public expresses a willingness to spend more tax money to expand child development services in low-income communities. Support is particularly strong for health screening and for Head Start; support for day care for young children of working parents is less strong.

The question:

A recommendation has been made that child development services be expanded in low-income communities. As I read off each service, one at a time, would you tell me whether you would be willing or not willing to spend more taxes for that service in low-income communities?

	National Totals		
	Willing %	Not Willing %	Don't Know %
Screening young children for health problems	74	21	5
Head Start programs to help young children get a better start in school	69	25	6
Day care for young children with working parents	58	36	6

"I didn't come all the way up here to get the results of the latest poll. I thought you could dispense some wisdom of the ages."

Biggest Problems Facing Local Public Schools in 1989

Each year since 1986 drug abuse has edged higher in the public's perception of the most important problems facing local public schools. In 1986, for the first time, more respondents mentioned the use of drugs as a problem than mentioned discipline. In other respects, the 1989 responses are very similar to those given in each of the past several Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa surveys.

The question:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Use of drugs	34	35	30	30
Lack of discipline	19	20	16	23
Lack of proper financial support	13	11	18	11
Poor curriculum/poor standards	8	9	9	7
Large schools/ overcrowding	8	6	11	6
Difficulty in getting good teachers	7	8	6	9
Parents' lack of interest	6	6	6	5
Integration/busing	4	3	5	7
Drinking/alcoholism	4	3	4	5
Low teacher pay	4	4	4	7
Teachers' lack of interest	4	4	6	2
Crime/vandalism	4	5	3	2
Pupils' lack of interest/ truancy	3	4	2	6
Moral standards	3	3	3	10
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	3	3	3	7
Lack of proper facilities	1	1	2	1
Mismanagement of funds/programs	1	1	2	1
Lack of needed teachers	1	1	1	1
Parents' involvement in school activities	1	1	1	2
Problems with administration	2	2	1	1
Communication problems	1	1	1	2
Lack of after-school programs	1	1	2	2
Too many schools/ declining enrollment	1	*	2	1
Transportation	1	1	1	1
Taxes are too high	1	1	*	1
Too much emphasis on sports	1	1	*	1
Peer pressure	1	1	1	*
Lack of family structure	1	1	1	2
School board politics	1	1	1	1
Teacher strikes	1	1	1	*
There are no problems	2	1	3	1
Miscellaneous	4	4	6	7
Don't know	9	10	6	4

*Less than one-half of 1%.
(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Illustrations by Roger T. Du Mah

Lowering Financial Barriers to College

The public has come to believe that all young people with the ability and desire to attend college should be able to do so, regardless of their financial status. Respondents to the 1989 survey strongly support making more state and federal assistance available for this purpose. Overwhelmingly, they approve more scholarships and grants, more work/study programs, and more low-interest loans.

The first question:

Many high school graduates cannot afford to attend college, although they may have the ability and desire to do so. When students have the ability and desire to attend college but not enough money, would you favor or oppose more state or federal assistance to enable them to attend?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	83	82	87	83
Oppose	13	14	11	14
Don't know	4	4	2	3

The second question:

There are several forms of state or federal assistance that might be provided to students who have the ability but not enough money to attend college. As I read off each form of assistance, one at a time, would you tell me whether you would favor or oppose providing this form of assistance?

	National Totals		
	Favor %	Oppose %	Don't Know %
More scholarships and grants	94	4	2
More work/study programs	94	3	3
More low-interest loans	93	5	2

Acknowledgments

The advisory panel for the 1989 education opinion poll consisted of the following persons: Helen Bain, associate professor of administration and supervision, Tennessee State University, Nashville; Terrel Bell, former U.S. Secretary of Education, now an author, lecturer, and consultant, Salt Lake City; Denis Doyle, senior fellow, Hudson Institute, Chevy Chase, Md.; Chester Finn, Jr., professor of education and public policy, Vanderbilt University, Washington (D.C.) office; Anne Lewis, education policy writer, Glenn Echo, Md.; Sylvia C. Pena, associate professor of education, University of Houston; and John Rowley, president, Phi Delta Kappa, and administrator, Livingston (N.J.) Public Schools. — Stanley M. Elam, coordinator, Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa Poll.

Research Procedure

The Sample. The sample used in this survey embraced a total of 1,584 adults (18 years of age and older). It is described as a modified probability sample of the nation. Personal, in-home interviewing was conducted in all areas of the nation and in all types of communities. A description of the sample can be found below.

Time of Interviewing. The fieldwork for this study was carried out during the periods of 5-7 May and 9-11 June 1989.

The Report. In the tables, the heading "Nonpublic School Parents" includes parents of students who attend parochial schools and parents of students who attend private or independent schools.

Due allowance must be made for statistical variation, especially in the case of findings for groups consisting of relatively few respondents, e.g., nonpublic school parents.

The findings of this report apply only to the U.S. as a whole and not to individual communities. Local surveys, using the same questions, can be conducted to determine how local areas compare with the national norm.

Composition of the Sample

Adults	%
No children in school	68
Public school parents	28*
Nonpublic school parents	6*

*Total exceeds 32% because some parents have children attending more than one kind of school.

Sex	%
Men	49
Women	51

Race	%
White	87
Nonwhite	13

Age	%
18-29 years	23
30-49 years	42
50 and over	35

Occupation (Chief Wage Earner)	%
Business and professional	31
Clerical and sales	9
Manual labor	36
Nonlabor force	18
Farm	3
Undesignated	3

Income	%
$40,000 and over	24
$30,000-$39,999	14
$20,000-$29,999	20
$10,000-$19,999	24
Under $10,000	12
Undesignated	6

Region	%
East	25
Midwest	25
South	31
West	19

Community Size	%
1 million and over	36
500,000-999,999	8
50,000-499,999	19
2,500-49,999	10
Under 2,500	27

Education	%
College	47
High school	45
Grade school	8

Design of the Sample

The sampling procedure is designed to produce an approximation of the adult civilian population, age 18 and older, living in the U.S., except for persons in institutions such as prisons or hospitals.

A replicated probability sample is used, down to the block level in urban areas and down to segments of townships in rural areas. More than 300 sampling locations are used in each survey.

The sample design included stratification by these seven size-of-community strata, using 1980 census data: 1) incorporated cities of population 1,000,000 and over, 2) incorporated cities of population 250,000 to 999,999, 3) incorporated cities of population 50,000 to 249,999, 4) urbanized

places not included in 1 and 2, 5) cities over 2,500 population outside of urbanized areas, 6) towns and villages with populations less than 2,500, and 7) rural places not included within town boundaries. Each of these strata was further stratified into four geographic regions: East, Midwest, South, and West. Within each city-size/regional stratum, the population was arrayed in geographic order and zoned into equal-sized groups of sampling units. Pairs of localities were selected in each zone, with probability of selection of each locality proportional to its population size in the 1980 census, producing two replicated samples of localities.

Separately for each survey, within each subdivision for which block statistics are available, a sample of blocks or block clusters is drawn with probability of selection proportional to the number of dwelling units. In all other subdivisions or areas, blocks or segments are drawn at random or with equal probability.

In each cluster of blocks and each segment, a randomly selected starting point is designated on the interviewer's map of the area. Starting at this point, interviewers are required to follow a given direction in the selection of households until their assignment is completed.

Interviewing is conducted at times when adults, in general, are most likely to be at home, which means on weekends, or, if on weekdays, after 4 p.m. for women and after 6 p.m. for men.

Allowance for persons not at home is made by a "times-at-home" weighting* procedure rather than by "callbacks." This procedure is a standard method for reducing the sample bias that would otherwise result from underrepresentation in the sample of persons who are difficult to find at home.

The prestratification by regions is routinely supplemented by fitting each obtained sample to the latest available Census Bureau estimates of the regional distribution of the population. Also, minor adjustments of the sample are made by educational attainment by men and women separately, based on the annual estimates of the Census Bureau (derived from its Current Population Survey) and by age.

*A. Politz and W. Simmons, "An Attempt to Get the 'Not at Homes' into the Sample Without Callbacks," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, March 1949, pp. 9-31.

Sampling Tolerances

In interpreting survey results, it should be borne in mind that all sample surveys are subject to sampling error, i.e., the extent to which the results may differ from what would be obtained if the whole population surveyed had been interviewed. The size of such sampling errors depends largely on the number of interviews.

The following tables may be used in estimating the sampling error of any percentage in this report. The computed allowances have taken into account the effect of the sample design upon sampling error. They may be interpreted as indicating the range (plus or minus the figure shown) within which the results of repeated samplings in the same time period could be expected to vary 95% of the time, assuming the same sampling procedure, the same interviewers, and the same questionnaire.

The first table shows how much allowance should be made for the sampling error of a percentage:

Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of a Percentage

	In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)* Sample Size						
	1,500	1,000	750	600	400	200	100
Percentages near 10	2	2	3	3	4	5	8
Percentages near 20	3	3	4	4	5	7	10
Percentages near 30	3	4	4	5	6	8	12
Percentages near 40	3	4	5	5	6	9	12
Percentages near 50	3	4	5	5	6	9	13
Percentages near 60	3	4	5	5	6	9	12
Percentages near 70	3	4	4	5	6	8	12
Percentages near 80	3	3	4	4	5	7	10
Percentages near 90	2	2	3	3	4	5	8

*The chances are 95 in 100 that the sampling error is not larger than the figures shown.

The table would be used in the following manner: Let us say that a reported percentage is 33 for a group that includes 1,000 respondents. We go to the row for "percentages near 30" in the table and across to the column headed "1,000."

The number at this point is 4, which means that the 33% obtained in the sample is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus four points. In other words, it is very probable (95 chances out of 100) that the true figure would be somewhere between 29% and 37%, with the most likely figure the 33% obtained.

In comparing survey results in two samples, such as, for example, men and women, the question arises as to how large a difference between them must be before one can be reasonably sure that it reflects a real difference. In the tables below, the number of points that must be allowed for in such comparisons is indicated.

Two tables are provided. One is for percentages near 20 or 80; the other, for percentages near 50. For percentages in between, the error to be allowed for lies between those shown in the two tables.

Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of the Difference

TABLE A	In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)* Percentages near 20 or percentages near 80					
Size of Sample	1,500	1,000	750	600	400	200
1,500	4					
1,000	4	5				
750	5	5	5			
600	5	5	6	6		
400	6	6	6	7	7	
200	8	8	8	8	9	10

TABLE B	Percentages near 50					
Size of Sample	1,500	1,000	750	600	400	200
1,500	5					
1,000	5	6				
750	6	6	7			
600	6	7	7	7		
400	7	8	8	8	9	
200	10	10	10	10	11	13

*The chances are 95 in 100 that the sampling error is not larger than the figures shown.

Here is an example of how the tables would be used: Let us say that 50% of men respond a certain way and 40% of women respond that way also, for a difference of 10 percentage points between them. Can we say with any assurance that the 10-point difference reflects a real difference between men and women on the question? Let us consider a sample that contains approximately 750 men and 750 women.

Since the percentages are near 50, we consult Table B, and, since the two samples are about 750 persons each, we look for the number in the column headed "750," which is also in the row designated "750." We find the number 7 here. This means that the allowance for error should be seven points, and that, in concluding that the percentage among men is somewhere between three and 17 points higher than the percentage among women, we should be wrong only about 5% of the time. In other words, we can conclude with considerable confidence that a difference exists in the direction observed and that it amounts to at least three percentage points.

If, in another case, men's responses amount to 22%, say, and women's to 24%, we consult Table A, because these percentages are near 20. We look in the column headed "750" and see that the number is 5. Obviously, then, the two-point difference is inconclusive.

How to Order the Poll

The minimum order for reprints of the published version of the Gallup Poll is 25 copies for $10. Additional copies are 25 cents each. This price includes postage for parcel post delivery. Where possible, enclose a check or money order.

If faster delivery is desired, do not include a remittance with your order. You will be billed at the above rates plus any additional cost involved in the method of delivery.

Persons who wish to order a set of the tables showing detailed demographic breakdowns on questions included in the 1989 Gallup/PDK education survey may do so by writing to Phi Delta Kappa, enclosing $10 to cover all costs. (These tables are not included in the published version of the poll.) In the fall of 1989, Phi Delta Kappa will publish *The Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa Polls of Attitudes Toward the Public School, 1969-1988: A 20-Year Compilation and Educational History*, edited by Stanley M. Elam, with historical summaries by Ben Brodinsky.

Orders for reprints or for the demographic breakdowns should be addressed to Gallup Poll, Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402-0789. Ph. 812/339-1156.